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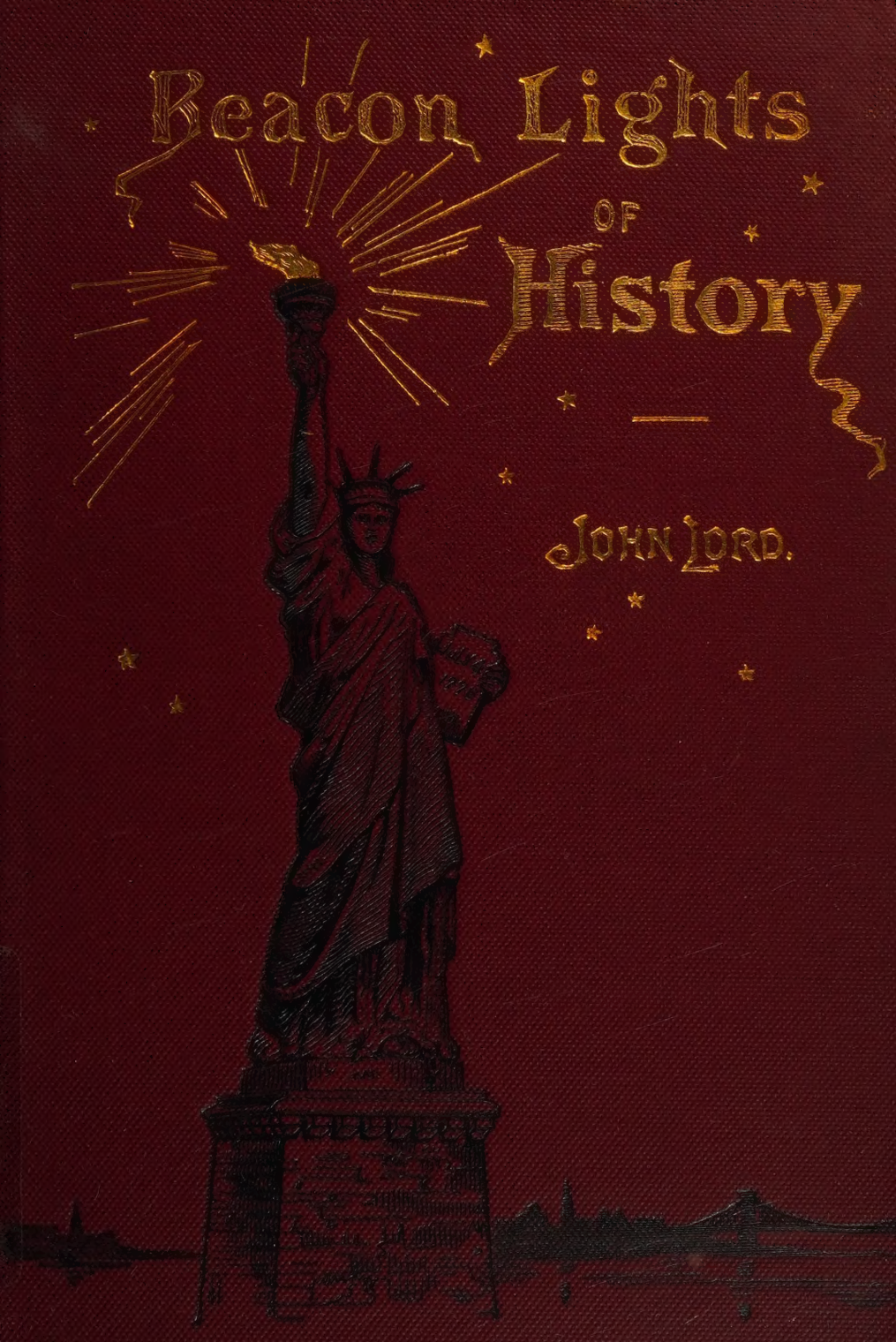

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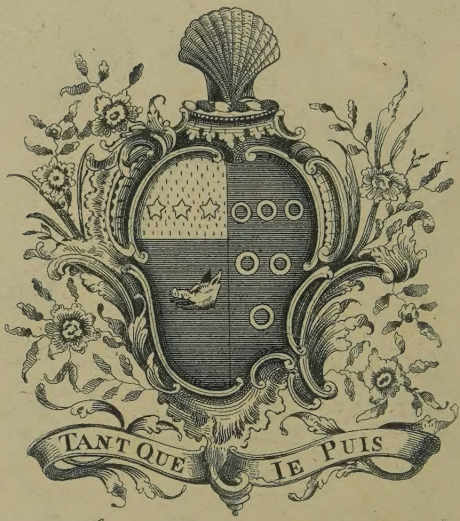

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LUTHERAN PASTOR

BEACON LIGHTS OF HISTORY.

BEACON LIGHTS OF HISTORY.

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XXXVII.

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS.

THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR.

A. D. 1594–1632.

BEACON LIGHTS.

XXXVII.

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS.

THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR.

THE Thirty Years' War, of which Gustavus Adolphus was the greatest hero, was the result of those religious agitations which the ideas of Luther produced. It was the struggle to secure religious liberty, — a warfare between Catholic and Protestant Germany. It differed from the Huguenot contest in this, — that the Protestants of France took up arms against their king to extort religious privileges; whereas the Protestants of Germany were marshalled by independent princes against other independent princes of a different religion, who sought to suppress Protestantism. In this warfare between Catholic and Protestant States, there were great political entanglements and issues that affected the balance of power in Europe. Hence the Thirty Years' War was political as well as religious. It was not purely a religious war like the crusades, although religious ideas gave rise to it. Nor was it an insurrection

of the people against their rulers to secure religious rights, so much as a contest between Catholic and Protestant princes to secure the recognition of their religious opinions in their respective States.

The Emperor of Germany in the time of Luther was Charles V., — the most powerful potentate of Europe, and, moreover, a bigoted Catholic. On his abdication, — one of the most extraordinary events in history, — the German dominions were given to his brother Ferdinand; Spain and the Low Countries were bestowed on his son Philip. Ferdinand had already been elected King of the Romans. There was a close alliance between these princes of the House of Austria to suppress Protestantism in Europe. The new Austrian emperor was not, indeed, so formidable as his father had been, but was still one of the greatest monarchs of Europe; and so powerful was the House of Austria that it excited the jealousy of the other European powers. It was to prevent the dangerous ascendency of Austria that Henry IV. of France raised a great army with a view of invading Germany, but was assassinated before he could carry his scheme into execution. He had armed France to secure what is called the "balance of power;" and it was with the view of securing this balance of power that Cardinal Richelieu, though a prince of the Church, took the side of the Protestants in the Thirty Years' War. This famous contest may therefore be

regarded as a civil war, dividing the German nations; as a religious war, to establish freedom of belief; and as a war to prevent the ascendency of Austria, in which a great part of Europe was involved.

The beginning of the contest, however, was the result of religious agitation. The ideas of Luther created universal discussion. Discussion led to animosities. All Germany was in a ferment; and the agitation was not confined to those States which accepted the Reformation, but to Catholic States also. The Catholic princes resolved to crush the Reformation, first in their own dominions, and afterwards in the other States of Germany. Hence, a bloody persecution of the Protestants took place in all Catholic States. Their sufferings were unendurable. For a while they submitted to the cruel lash, but at last they resolved to defend the right of worshipping God according to their consciences. They armed themselves, for death seemed preferable to religious despotism. For more than fifty years after the death of Luther, Germany was the scene of commotions ending in a fiery persecution. At that time Germany was in advance of the rest of Europe in wealth and intelligence; the Protestants especially were kindled to an enthusiasm, pertaining to theological questions, which we in these times can but feebly realize; and the Germans were doubtless the most earnest and religious people in Europe. In those days there

was neither religious indifference nor scepticism nor rationalism. The faith of the people was simple, and they were resolved to maintain it at any cost. But there were religious parties and asperities, even among the Protestants. The Lutherans would not unite with the Calvinists, and the Calvinists would not accede to the demands of the Lutherans.

After a series of struggles with the Catholics, the Lutherans succeeded, by the treaty of Augsburg (1555), in securing toleration; and this toleration lasted during the reigns of Ferdinand I. and Maximilian II. Indeed, Germany enjoyed tranquillity until the reign of Matthias, in 1612. This usurping emperor, who had delivered Germany from the Turks, abolished in his dominions the Protestant religion, so far as edicts and persecution could deprive the Protestants of their religious liberties. Matthias died in 1619, and was succeeded by Ferdinand II., a bigoted prince, who had been educated by the Jesuits. This emperor was an inveterate enemy of the Protestants. He forbade their meetings, deprived them even of civil privileges, pulled down their churches and schools, erected scaffolds in every village, appointed only Catholic magistrates, and inflicted unsparing cruelties on all who seceded from the Catholic church.

It was under this Austrian emperor, seventy-three years from the death of Luther, that the first act of

the bloody tragedy which I am to describe was opened by an insurrection in Bohemia, one of the hereditary possessions of the House of Austria.

In this kingdom, isolated from the rest of Germany, separated on every side from adjoining States by high mountains of volcanic origin, peopled with the descendants of the ancient Sclavonians, who were characterized by impulse and impetuosity, the reformed doctrines had taken a powerful hold of the affections and convictions of the people. The followers of John Huss and Jerome of Prague were something like the Lollards of England, in their spirit and sincerity. But they were persecuted by their Catholic rulers with a rigor and cruelty never seen among the Lollards; for Ferdinand II. was the hereditary king of Bohemia as well as emperor of Germany.

At last his tyranny and cruelties became unendurable, and in a violent burst of passionate indignation his deputies were thrown out of the windows of the chamber of the Council of Regency at Prague. This act of violence was the signal of a general revolt, not in Bohemia merely, but in Silesia, Moravia, Hungary, and Austria. The celebrated Count Mansfeld, a soldier of fortune, with only four thousand troops, dared to defy the whole imperial power; and for a while he was successful. The Bohemians renounced their allegiance to Ferdinand, and chose for their king Frederick V.,—

Elector Palatine of the Rhine, son-in-law of James I. of England, and head of the Protestant party in Germany. He unwisely abandoned his electoral palace at Heidelberg, to grasp the royal sceptre at Prague. But he was no match for the Austrian emperor, who, summoning from every quarter the allies and adherents of imperial power, and making peace with other enemies, poured into Bohemia such overwhelming forces under Maximilian, Duke of Bavaria, that his authority was established more firmly than before. The battle of Prague (1620) decided the fate of Bohemia, and the Elector Palatine became a fugitive, and his possessions were given to the Duke of Bavaria.

Then followed a persecution which has had no parallel since the slaughter of the Albigenses and the massacre of St. Bartholomew. The unhappy kingdom of Bohemia was abandoned to inquisitions and executions; all liberties were suppressed, the nobles were decimated, ministers and teachers were burned or beheaded, and Protestants of every rank, age, and condition were prohibited from acting as guardians to children, or making wills, or contracting marriages with Catholics, or holding any office of trust and emolument. They were outlawed as felons, and disfranchised as infidels. The halls of justice were deserted, the Muses accompanied the learned in their melancholy flight, and all that remained of Bohemian gallantry and heroism forsook the land.

Strange to say, the land of Huss and Jerome became henceforth the strongest hold of Austrian despotism and papal superstition.

This is one of those instances where persecution proved successful. It is a hackneyed saying that "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church;" and it is true that lofty virtues have been generally developed by self-sacrifice and martyrdom, and that only through great tribulation have permanent blessings been secured. The Hollanders, by inundating their fields and fighting literally to the "last ditch," preserved their liberties and secured ultimate prosperity. The fires of Smithfield did not destroy the reformed religion in England in the time of Mary, and the jails and judicial murders of later and better times did not prevent the progress of popular rights, or the extension of Puritanism in the wilds of the American continent. But in the history of society the instances are unfortunately numerous when bigotry and despotism have kindled their infernal fires and erected their bloody scaffolds, not to purify the Church and nourish the principles of Christian progress, but to destroy what is good as well as what is evil. What availed the struggles of the Waldenses in the Middle Ages? Who came to the rescue of Savonarola when he attempted to reform the lives of degenerate Florentines? What beneficial effects resulted ultimately from the Inquisition in Spain?

How was the revocation of the edict of Nantes overruled for the good of the Huguenots of France?

And yet the unfortunate suppression of religious liberty in Bohemia, and the sufferings of those who came to her rescue, especially the misfortunes of the Elector Palatine, arrayed the Protestant princes of Germany against the Emperor, and created general indignation throughout Europe. Austria became more than ever a hated and dreaded power, not merely to the States of Sweden, Denmark, Holland, and England, but to Catholic France herself, then ruled by that able and ambitious statesman Cardinal Richelieu, before whose tomb in an after age the czar Peter bowed in earnest homage from the recollection and admiration of his transcendent labors in behalf of absolutism. Even Richelieu, a prince of the Church and the persecutor of the Huguenots, was alarmed at the encroachments of Austria, and intrigued with Protestant princes to undermine her dangerous ascendency.

Then opened the second act of the bloody drama of the seventeenth century, when the allied Protestant princes of Germany, assisted by the English and the Dutch, rallied under the leadership of Christian, King of Denmark, and resolved to recover what they had lost; while Bethlen Gabor, a Transylvanian prince, at the head of an army of robbers, invaded Hungary and Austria. The Emperor, straitened in his finances, was

in no condition to meet this powerful confederacy, although the illustrious Tilly was the commander of his forces.

But the demon of despotism, who never sleeps, raised up to his assistance a great military genius. This was Wallenstein, Duke of Friedland, the richest noble in Bohemia. The person whom he most resembled, in that age of struggle and contending forces, when despotism sought unscrupulous agents, was Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, — the right hand of Charles I., in his warfare against the liberties of England. Like Strafford, he was an apostate from the principles in which he had been educated; like him, he had arisen from a comparatively humble station; like him, his talents were as commanding as his ambition, — devoted first to his own exaltation; and, secondly, to the cause of absolutism, with which he sympathized with all the intensity that a proud and domineering spirit may be supposed to feel for the struggles of inexperienced democracy. Like the English statesman, the German general was a Jesuit in the use of tools, jealous of his authority, liberal in his rewards, and fearful in his vengeance. Though greedy of admiration and fond of display, he surrounded himself with mystery and gloom. Like Strafford, he was commanding in his person, dignified, reserved, and sullen; with an eye piercing and melancholy, a brow lowering with thought and care,

and a lip compressed into determination and twisted into a smile of ironical disdain.

This nobleman had fought with distinction as a colonel at the battle of Prague, when Bohemian liberties had been prostrated, and had signally distinguished himself in his infamous crusade against his own countrymen. He offered, at his own expense, to raise and equip an army of fifty thousand men in the service of the Emperor; but demanded as a condition, that he should have the appointment of all his officers, and the privilege of enriching himself and army from the spoils and confiscations of conquered territories. These terms were extraordinary and humiliating to an absolute sovereign, yet, at the crisis in which Ferdinand was placed, they were too tempting to be refused.

Wallenstein fulfilled his promises, and raised in an incredibly short time an immense army, composed of outlaws and robbers and adventurers from all nations. He advanced rapidly against the allied Protestant forces, levying enormous contributions wherever he appeared; as imperious to friends as to foes, mistrusted and feared by both, yet supremely indifferent to praise or censure; resting on the power of brute force and his ability to enrich his soldiers. Possessing a fine military genius, unbounded means, and unscrupulous rapacity, and assisted by such generals as Tilly, Pappenheim, and Piccolomini, seconded by Maximilian, Duke of Bavaria,

he soon reduced his enemies to despair. The King of Denmark was unequal to the contest, and sued for peace. The Elector Frederic again became a fugitive, the Duke of Brunswick was killed, and the intrepid Mansfeld died. The Electors of Saxony and Brandenburg, the natural defenders of Protestantism and the leading princes of the league, were awed into an abject neutrality. The old protectors of Lutheranism were timid and despairing. The monarchs of Europe trembled. Germany lay prostrate and bleeding. Christendom stood aghast at the greatness of the calamities which afflicted Germany and threatened neighboring nations.

But the Emperor at Vienna was overjoyed, and swelled with arrogance and triumph. He divided among the members of his imperial house the rich benefices of the Church, and bestowed upon his victorious general the revenues of provinces. He now resolved to pursue the King of Denmark into his remotest territories, to dethrone the King of Sweden, to give away the crown of Poland, to aid the Spaniards in the recovery of the United Provinces, to exterminate the Protestant religion, to subvert the liberties of the German nations, and reign as a terrible incarnation of imperial tyranny. He would even revive the dreams of Charlemagne and Charles V., and make Vienna the centre of that power which once emanated from Rome. He would ally him-

self more strongly with the Pope, and extend the double tyranny of priests and kings over the whole continent of Europe. Fines, imprisonments, tortures, banishments, and executions were now added to the desolations which one hundred and fifty thousand soldiers inflicted on villages and cities that had been for generations increasing in wealth and prosperity.

In that dark hour of calamity and fears, Providence raised up a greater hero than Wallenstein, a noble protector and intrepid deliverer, even Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden; and the third act of the political tragedy opens with his brilliant career.

Carlyle has somewhere said: "Is not every genius an impossibility until he appear?" This is singularly true of Gustavus Adolphus. It was the last thing for contemporaries to conjecture that the deliverer of Germany, and the great hero of the Thirty Years' War, would have arisen in the ice-bound regions of northern Europe. No great character had arisen in Sweden of exalted fame, neither king nor poet, nor philosopher, nor even singer. The little kingdom, to all appearance, was rich only in mines of iron and hills of snow. It was not till the middle of the sixteenth century that Sweden was even delivered from base dependence on Denmark.

But Gustavus before he was thirty-five years of age

had made his countrymen a nation of soldiers; had freed his kingdom from Danish, Russian, and Polish enemies; had made great improvements in the art of war, having introduced a new system of tactics never materially improved except by Frederick II.; had reduced strategy to a science; had raised the importance of the infantry, had increased the strictness of military discipline, had trained up a band of able generals, and inspired his soldiers with unbounded enthusiasm.

And he had raised in the camp a new tone of moral feeling. Not even Cromwell equalled him in divesting war of its customary atrocities, and keeping alive the spirit of religion. The worship of God formed one of the most important duties of the Swedish army wherever located. "Twice every day the roll of the drum assembled the soldiers to prayer. The usual vices of soldiers, like profanity and drunkenness and gambling, were uniformly punished. Death was inflicted on any soldier who assaulted a citizen in his house. Even a certificate was required of the chief citizens of any place where troops were quartered, that their conduct had been orderly. He never allowed, under any provocation, a city to be taken by assault, — a striking contrast to the imperial generals."

Nor amid the toils and dangers of war was Gustavus unmindful of his duties as a king. He was one of the most enlightened statesmen that had appeared since

Charlemagne and Alfred. He established schools and colleges, founded libraries, reformed the codes of law, introduced wise mercantile regulations, rewarded eminent merit, respected the voice of experience, and developed the industries of the country. What Richelieu and Colbert did for France, what Burleigh and Cromwell did for England, Gustavus did for Sweden. His prime minister is illustrious for wisdom and ability, the celebrated Oxenstiern, through whose labors and genius the country felt no impoverishment from war. He laid the foundation of that prosperity which made a little kingdom great.

But all his excellences as a general, a statesman, and a ruler paled before the exalted virtues of his private life. His urbanity, his gentleness, his modesty, his meekness, his simplicity, and his love won all hearts, and have never been exceeded except by Alfred the Great. He was a Saint Louis on a throne, in marked contrast with the suspicion, duplicity, roughness, and egotism of Oliver Cromwell, — the only other great man of the century who equalled Gustavus in the value of public services and enlightened mind. It is not often that Christian graces and virtues are developed amid the tumults of war. David lost nothing of his pious fervor and reliance on God when pursuing the Philistines, nor Marcus Aurelius when fighting barbarians on the frozen Danube. The perils and vicisssitudes

of war, with the momentous interests involved, made Lincoln shine, amid all his jokes, a firm believer in the overruling power that Napoleon failed to see. And so of Washington: he was a better man and firmer Christian from the responsibilities that were thrust upon him. Not so with Frederic the Great, and the marshals of Louis XIV., with the exception of Turenne: war seemed rather to develop their worst qualities. It usually makes a man unscrupulous, hard, and arrogant. Military life is anything but interesting in the usual bearing of Prussian officers. In our own Revolutionary war, generals developed pride and avarice and jealousy. War turned Tilly into a fiend. How cold and sullen and selfish it made Napoleon! How grasping and greedy it made Marlborough! How unscrupulous it made Clive and Hastings! How stubborn and proud it made Wellington! How vain and pompous it made Scott! How overbearing it made Belle-Isle and Villars! How reckless and hard it made Ney and Murat! The dangers and miseries of war develop sternness, hardness, and indifference to suffering. It is violence; and violence does not naturally produce the peaceful virtues. It produces courage, indeed, but physical rather than moral, — least of all, that spiritual courage which makes martyrs and saints. It makes boon companions, not friends. It gives exaggerated ideas of self-importance. It exalts the outward and material, not the spiritual

and the real. The very tread of a military veteran is stately, proud, and conscious, — like that of a procession of cardinals, or of railway kings.

So that when a man inured to camps and battles shines in the modest unconsciousness of a Christian gentleman or meditative sage, we feel unusual reverence for him. We feel that his soul is unpolluted, and that he is superior to ordinary temptations.

And nothing in war develops the greatness of the higher qualities of heart and soul but the sacredness of a great cause. This takes a man out of himself, and binds his soul to God. He learns to feel that he is merely an instrument of Almighty power. It was the sacredness of a great cause that shed such a lustre on the character of Washington. How unimpressible the victories of Charlemagne, disconnected with that work of civilization which he was sent into the world to reconstruct! How devoid of interest and grandeur were the battles of Marston Moor and Worcester, without reference to those principles of religious liberty which warmed the soul of Cromwell! The conflicts of Bunker Hill and Princeton were insignificant when compared with the mighty array of forces at Blenheim or Austerlitz; but when associated with ideas of American independence, and the extension of American greatness from the Atlantic to the Pacific, their sublime results are impressed upon the mind with

ever-increasing power. Even French soldiers have seldom been victorious unless inspired by ideas of liberty or patriotism. It is ever the majesty of a cause which makes not only great generals but good men. And it was the greatness of the cause with which Gustavus Adolphus was identified that gave to his character such moral beauty, — that same beauty which exalted William the Silent and William of Orange amid the disasters of their country, and made them eternally popular. After all, the permanent idols of popular idolatry are not the intellectually great, but the morally beautiful, — and all the more attractive when their moral excellence is in strong contrast with the prevailing vices of contemporaries. It was the moral greatness of Gustavus which has given to him his truest fame. Great was he as a military genius, but greater still as a benefactor of oppressed peoples.

Surely it was no common hero who armed himself for the deliverance of Germany, which prostrate and bleeding held out her arms to be rescued from political degradation, and for the preservation of liberties dearer to good men than life itself. All Protestant Europe responded to the cry; for great interests were now at stake, not in Germany merely, but in the neighboring nations. It was to deliver his Lutheran brethren in danger of extermination, and to raise a barrier against the overwhelming power of Austria, that Gustavus Adolphus

lent his armies to the Protestant princes of Germany. Other motives may have entered into his mind; his pride had been piqued by the refusal of the Emperor Ferdinand to acknowledge his title as King; his dignity was wounded by the contemptuous insolence shown to his ambassadors; his fears were excited that Austria might seek to deprive him of his throne. The imperial armies had already conquered Holstein and Jutland, — provinces that belonged to Sweden. Unless Austria were humbled, Sweden would be ruined. Gustavus embarked in the war against Austria, as William III. afterwards did against Louis XIV. Wars to preserve the "balance of power" have not generally been deemed offensive, when any power has become inordinately aggrandized. Pitt opposed Napoleon, to rescue Europe from universal monarchy.

So Gustavus, deeply persuaded of the duties laid upon him, assembled together the deputies of his kingdom, — the representatives of the three estates, — and explained to them his intentions and motives. "I know," said he, "the dangers I am about to encounter; I know that it is probable I shall never return; I feel convinced that my life will terminate on the field of battle. Let no one imagine that I am actuated by private feelings or fondness for war. My object is to set bounds to the increasing power of a dangerous empire before all resistance becomes impossible. Your

children will not bless your memory if, instead of civil and religious freedom, you bequeath to them the superstitions of monks and the double tyranny of popes and emperors. We must prevent the subjugation of the Continent before we are reduced to depend upon a narrow sea as the only safeguard of our liberties; for it is delusion to suppose that a mighty empire will not be able to raise fleets, if once firmly established on the shores of the ocean." Then taking his infant daughter Christiana in his arms, he recommended her to the protection of the nation, and bade adieu to the several orders of the State. Amid their tears and sobs, he invoked upon them and his enterprise the blessing of Almighty God. Then, hastening his preparations, he embarked his forces for the deliverance of Germany. It was on the 24th of June, 1630, just one hundred years after the confession of Augsburg, that Gustavus Adolphus landed on the German soil.

If ever the ruler of a nation is to be justified for going to war when his country is not actually invaded, it was doubtless Gustavus Adolphus. Had he withheld his aid, the probability is that all Germany would have succumbed to the Austrian emperor, and have been incorporated with his empire; and not only Germany, but Denmark and Sweden. The Protestant religion would have been suppressed in northern Germany, as it was in France by Louis XIV. There would have been no

Protestant country in Europe but England, and perhaps Holland. A united German Empire, with the restoration of the Catholic religion, would have been a most dangerous power, — much more so than at the present day. Some there are, doubtless, who would condemn Gustavus for the invasion of Germany, and think he ought to have stayed at home and let his unfortunate neighbors take care of themselves the best way they could. Perhaps the peace societies would take this ground, and the apostles of thrift and material prosperity. But I confess, when I see a man like the King of Sweden, with all the temptations of luxury and ease, encountering all sorts of perils and fatigues, — yea, offering up his life in battle in order to emancipate suffering humanity, — then every generous impulse and every dictate of enlightened reason urge me to add my praises with those of past generations in honor of such exalted heroism.

According to the authors of those times, signs and prodigies appeared, to warn mankind of the sanguinary struggle which was now to take place. "In the dead of night, on wild heaths, in solitary valleys, the clang of arms was heard. Armies were seen encountering each other in the heavens, marshalled by aërial leaders, while monstrous births, mock suns, and showers of fire filled the minds of the superstitious with fear and dread. It would be puerile to believe these statements,

yet if the stupendous framework of external nature ever could exhibit sympathy with the brief calamities of man, it may well be supposed to have been displayed when one of the fairest portions of the earth was again to be ravaged with fire and sword; and when the melancholy lesson, so often exemplified before, was to receive still further confirmation, — that of all the evils with which Divine wisdom permits this world to be visited, none can be compared to those which the wrath of man is so often eager to inflict upon his fellows."

I need not detail the various campaigns of the Swedish hero, his marchings and counter-marchings, his sieges and battles and victories, until the power of Austria was humbled and northern Germany was delivered. The history of all war is the same. There is no variety except to the eye of a military man. Military history is a dreary record of dangers, sufferings, mistakes, and crimes; occasionally it is relieved by brilliant feats of courage and genius, which create enthusiastic admiration, but generally it is monotonous. It has but little interest except to contemporaries. Who now reads the details of our last great war? Who has not almost forgotten the names of its ordinary generals? How sickening the description of the Crusades! The mind cannot dwell on the conflagrations, the massacres, the starvations, the desolations, of an invaded country

Few even read a description of the famous battles of the world, which decided the fate of nations. When battles and marches are actually taking place, and all is uncertainty, then there is a vivid curiosity to learn immediate results; but when wars are ended, we forget the intense excitements which we may have felt when they were taking place. We gaze with eager interest on a game of football, but when it is ended we care but little for the victors. It is only when the remote consequences of great wars are traced by philosophical historians, revealing the ways of Providence, retribution, and eternal justice, that interest is enkindled. No book to me is more dreary and uninteresting than the campaigns of Frederic II., though painted by the hand of one of the greatest masters of modern times. Even interest in the details of the battles of Napoleon is absorbed in the interest we feel in the man, — how he was driven hither and thither by the Providence he ignored, and made to point a moral to an immortal tale. All we care about the histories of wars is the general results, and the principles to be deduced as they bear on the cause of civilization.

It was fortunate for the fame and the cause of Gustavus that at the very outset of his career, when he landed in Pomerania, with his small army of twenty thousand men, the Emperor had been prevailed upon by a pressure he could not resist, and the intrigues of

all the German princes, to dispense with the services of Wallenstein. Spain, France, Bavaria, — the whole Electoral College, Catholic as well as Protestant, — clamored for the discharge of the most unscrupulous general of modern times. He was detested and feared by everybody. Humanity shed tears over his exactions and cruelties, while general fears were aroused that his influence was dangerous to the public peace. Most people supposed that the war was virtually ended, and that he was therefore no longer needed.

Loath was Ferdinand to part with the man to whom he was indebted for the establishment of his throne; and it seems he was also personally attached to him. Long did he resist expostulations and threats. He felt as poor Ganganelli felt when called upon by the Bourbon courts of Europe to annul the charter of the Jesuits. Wallenstein would probably have been retained by Ferdinand, had this been possible; but the Emperor was forced to yield to overwhelming importunities. So the dismissal of the general was decreed at the diet of Worms, and a messenger of the Emperor delivered to the haughty victor the decree of his sovereign.

Wallenstein was then at the head of one hundred thousand men. Would he obey the order? Would he retire to private life? Ambitious and unscrupulous as he was, he knew that no one, however powerful, could resist an authority universally conceded

to be supreme and legitimate. It was like the recall of a proconsul by the Roman Emperor and Senate: he could resist for a time, but resistance meant ultimate ruin. He also knew that he would be recalled, for he was necessary to the Emperor. He anticipated the successes of Gustavus. He was not prepared to be a traitor. He would wait his time.

So he resigned his command without a moment's hesitation, and with apparent cheerfulness. He even loaded the messenger with costly gifts. He appeared happy to be relieved from labor and responsibility, and retired at once to his vast Bohemian estates to pursue his favorite studies in the science of the stars, to enshroud himself in mystery and gloom, and dazzle his countrymen by the splendor of his life. "His table was never furnished with less than one hundred covers; none but a noble of ancient family was intrusted with the office of superintending his household; an armed guard of fifty men waited in his antechamber; the ramparts of his castle were lined with sentinels; six barons and as many knights constantly attended on his person; sixty pages were trained and supported in his palace, which was decorated with all the wonders of art, and almost realized the fictions of Eastern luxury." In this splendid retirement Wallenstein brooded on his wrongs, and waited for the future.

The dismissal of this able general was a great mis-

take on the part of the Emperor. There were left no generals capable of opposing Gustavus. The supreme command had devolved on Tilly, able but bigoted, and best known for his remorseless cruelty when Magdeburg was taken by assault, — the direst tragedy of the war. This city was one of the first to welcome the invasion of the King of Sweden, and also to adopt the Protestant religion. It was the most prosperous city in northern Germany; one of the richest and most populous. Against this mercantile fortress Tilly directed all his energies, for he detested the spirit of its people. It was closely invested by the imperial troops, and fell before Gustavus could advance to relieve it. It was neglected by the electors of Saxony and Brandenburg, who were timid and pusillanimous, and it was lulled into false security by its strong position and defences. Not sufficient preparation for defence had been made by the citizens, who trusted to its strong walls, and knew that Gustavus was advancing to relieve it. But unexpectedly it was assaulted in the most daring and desperate manner, and all was lost. On a Sabbath morning, the sudden toll of alarm bells, the roar of artillery, the roll of drums beating to quarter, and the piercing cries of women and children, mingled with the shouts and execrations of brutal and victorious soldiers, announced the fate of Magdeburg. Forty thousand people — men, women, and children — were inhumanly

butchered, without necessity, quarter, compassion, or remorse. So cold and hard is war! This was the saddest massacre in the history of Germany, and one of the greatest crimes that a successful general ever committed. History has no language, and painting no colors to depict the horrors of that dreadful scene; and the interval of more than two hundred years has not weakened the impression of its horrors. The sack of Magdeburg stands out in the annals of war like the siege of Tyre and the fall of Jerusalem.

But it roused the Protestants as from a trance. It united them, as the massacre of St. Bartholomew united the Huguenots. They marched under the standard of Gustavus with the same enthusiasm that the Huguenots showed under Henry IV. at the battle of Ivry. There was now no limit to the successes of the heroic Swede. The decisive battle of Leipsic, the passage of the Lech, the defence of Nuremberg, and the great final victory at Lutzen raised the military fame of Gustavus to a height unknown since Hannibal led his armies over the Alps, or Cæsar encountered the patrician hosts at the battle of Pharsalia. No victories were ever more brilliant than his; and they not only gave him a deathless fame, but broke forever the Austrian fetters. His reputation as a general was fairly earned. He ranks with Condé, Henry IV., Frederic the Great, Marlborough, and Wellington; not, perhaps, with Alexander,

Cæsar, and Napoleon, — those phenomena of military genius, the exalted trio who shine amid the glories of the battlefield, as Homer, Dante, and Shakspeare loom up in fame above other immortal poets.

In two years from the landing of Gustavus Adolphus on the island of Ruden, near the southern extremity of the Baltic, he expelled a triumphant enemy from Pomerania, traversed the banks of the Oder, overran the Duchy of Mecklenburg, ascended the Elbe, delivered Saxony from the armies of Tilly, crossed the Thuringian forest, entered Frankfort in triumph, restored the Palatinate to its lawful sovereign, took possession of some of the strongest fortresses on the Rhine, overran Bavaria, occupied its capital, crossed the Danube, and then returned to Saxony, to offer up his life on the plains of Lutzen. There, on that memorable battle-field, where the descending sun of victory in later times shed a delusive gleam on the eagles of Napoleon before his irremediable ruin, did Gustavus encounter the great antagonist of German liberties, whom the necessities of the Emperor had summoned from retirement. Wallenstein once more commanded the imperial armies, but only on conditions which made him virtually independent of his master. He was generalissimo, with almost unlimited authority, so long as the war should last; and the Emperor agreed to remove neither the general himself nor his officers, and gave

him principalities and spoils indefinitely. He was the most powerful subject in Europe, and the greatest general next to Gustavus. I read of no French or English general who has been armed with such authority. Cromwell and Napoleon took it; it was not conferred by legitimate and supreme power. Had Wallenstein been successful to the end, he might have grasped the imperial sceptre. Had Gustavus lived, he might have been the dictator of Germany.

Impatient were both commanders to engage in the contest which each knew would be decisive. Long did they wait for opportunities. At last, on the 6th of November, 1632, the defenders and the foes of German liberties arrayed themselves for the great final encounter. The Protestants gained the day, but Gustavus fell, exclaiming to the murderous soldiers who demanded his name and quality, "I am the King of Sweden! And I seal this day, with my blood, the liberties and religion of the German nation."

The death of Gustavus Adolphus in the hour of victory was a shock which came upon the allies like the loss of the dearest friend. The victory seemed too dearly purchased. The greatest protector which Protestantism ever knew had perished, as he himself predicted. Pappenheim, the bravest of the Austrian generals, also perished; and with him, the flower of Wallenstein's army. Schiller thinks that Gustavus

died fortunately for his fame; that had he survived the decisive battle of Lutzen, he not only could have dictated terms to the Emperor, but might have yielded to the almost irresistible temptation of giving laws to the countries he had emancipated. But he did not live to be tried. That rarest of all trials was reserved alone for our Washington to pass through triumphantly, — to set an example to all countries and ages of the superiority of moral to intellectual excellence. Gustavus might have triumphed like Washington, and he might have yielded like Cromwell. We do not know. This only we know, — that he was not merely the great hero of the Thirty Years' War, but one of the best men who ever wore a crown; that he conferred on the Protestants and on civilization an immortal and inestimable service, and that he is to be regarded as one of the great benefactors of the world.

The Thirty Years' War loses its dramatic interest after the battle of Lutzen. The final issue was settled, although the war was carried on sixteen years longer. It was not till 1648 that the peace of Westphalia was signed, which guaranteed the liberties of Germany, and established the balance of power. That famous treaty has also been made the foundation of all subsequent treaties between the European nations, and created an era in modern history. It took place after the death of Richelieu, when Mazarin ruled France in

the name of Louis XIV., and when Charles I. was in the hands of Cromwell.

With the death of Gustavus we also partially lose sight of Wallenstein. He never afterwards gained victories commensurate with his reputation. He remained, after the battle of Lutzen, unaccountably inactive in Bohemia. But if his military fame was tarnished, his pride and power remained. His military exactions became unendurable, and it is probable he was a traitor. So unpopular did he become, and so suspicious was the Emperor, who lost confidence in him, that he was assassinated by the order of his sovereign. He was too formidable to be removed in any other way. He probably deserved his fate. Although it was difficult to bring this great culprit to justice, yet his death is a lesson to traitors. "There are many ways," said Cicero, "in which a man may die," — referring to the august usurper of the Roman world.

I will not dwell on the sixteen remaining years of the Thirty Years' War. It is too horrible a picture to paint. The desolation and misery which overwhelmed Germany were most frightful and revolting. The war was carried on without system or genius. "Expeditions were undertaken apparently with no other view than to desolate hostile provinces, till in the end provisions and winter quarters formed the principal object of the summer campaigns." "Disease, famine, and want of

discipline swept away whole armies before they had seen an enemy." Soldiers deserted the ranks, and became roving banditti. Law and justice entirely vanished from the land. Germany, it is asserted by Mitchell, lost probably twelve millions of people. Before the war, the population was sixteen millions; at the close of the war, it had dwindled to four millions. The city of Augsburg at one time had eighty thousand inhabitants; at the close of the war, it had only eighteen thousand. "No less than thirty thousand villages and hamlets were destroyed. Peaceful peasants were hunted for mere sport, like the beasts of the forest. Citizens were nailed up and fired at like targets. Women were collected into bands, driven like slaves into camp, and exposed to indignities worse than death. The fields were allowed to run waste, and forests sprung up and covered entire districts which before the war had been under full cultivation." Amid these scenes of misery and ruin, vices were more marked than calamities. They were carried to the utmost pitch of vulgarity. Both Austrian and Swedish generals were often so much intoxicated, for days together, as to be incapable of service. Never was a war attended by so many horrors. Never was crime more general and disgusting. So terrible were the desolations, that it took Germany one hundred years to recover from her losses. It never recovered the morality and religion

which existed in the time of Luther. That war retarded civilization in all the countries where it raged. It was a moral and physical conflagration.

But there is a God in this world, and the evils were overruled. It is certain that Protestantism was rescued from extermination on the continent of Europe. It is clear also that a barrier was erected against the aggressions of Austria. The Catholic and the Protestant religions were left unmolested in the countries where they prevailed, and all religious sects were tolerated. Religious toleration, since the Thirty Years' War, has been the boast and glory of Germany.

We should feel a sickening melancholy if something for the ultimate good of the world were not to come from such disasters as filled Germany with grief and indignation for a whole generation; for the immediate effects of the Thirty Years' War were more disastrous than those of any war I have read of in the history of Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire. In the civil wars of France and England, cities and villages were generally spared. Civilization in those countries has scarcely ever been retarded for more than a generation; but it was put back in Germany for a century. Yet the enormous sacrifice of life and property would seem to show the high value which Providence places on the great rights of mankind, in comparison with material prosperity or the lives of men. What is

spiritual is permanent; what is material is transient. The early history of Christianity is the history of martyrdom. Five millions of Crusaders perished, that Europe might learn liberality of mind. It took one hundred years of contention and two revolutions to secure religious toleration in England. France passed through awful political hurricanes, in order that feudal injustice might be removed. In like manner, twelve millions of people perished in Germany, that despotism might be rebuked.

Fain would we believe that what little was gained proved a savor of life unto life; that seeds of progress were planted in that unhappy country which after a lapse of one hundred years would germinate and develop a higher civilization. What a great Protestant power has arisen in northern Germany to awe and keep in check not Catholicism merely, but such a hyperborean giant as Russia in its daring encroachments. But for Prussia, Russia might have extended her conquests to the south as well as to the west. But for the Thirty Years' War, no such empire as Prussia would have been probable, or perhaps possible. But for that dreadful contest, there might have been to-day only the Catholic religion among the descendants of the Teutonic barbarians on the continent of Europe. But for that war, the Austrian Empire might have retained a political ascendency in

Europe until the French Revolution; and such countries as Sweden and Denmark might have been absorbed in it, as well as Saxony, Brandenburg, and Hanover. What a terrible thing for Germany would have been the unbroken and iron despotism of Austria, extending its Briarean arms into every corner of Europe where the German language is spoken! What a blow such a despotism would have been to science, literature, and philosophy! Would Catholic Austria, supreme in Germany, have established schools, or rewarded literary men? The Jesuits would have flourished and triumphed from Pomerania to Wallachia; from the Baltic to the Danube.

It may have taken one hundred years for Germany to rally after such miseries and disasters as I have had time only to allude to, and not fully to describe; but see how gloriously that country has at last arisen above all misfortunes! Why may we not predict a noble future for so brave and honest a people, — the true descendants of those Teutonic conquerers to whom God gave, nearly two thousand years ago, the possessions and the lands of the ancient races who had not what the Germans had, — a soul; the soul which hopes, and the soul which conquers? The Thirty Years' War proved that liberty is not a dream, nor truth a defeated power. Liberty cannot be extinguished among such peoples, though "oceans may overwhelm it and

mountains may press it down." It is the boon of one hundred generations, the water of life distilled from the tears of unnumbered millions, — the precious legacy of heroes and martyrs, who in different nations and in different ages, inspired by the contemplation of its sublime reality, counted not their lives dear unto them, if by the sacrifice of life this priceless blessing could be transmitted to posterity.

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XXXVIII.

CARDINAL DE RICHELIEU.

ABSOLUTISM.

A. D. 1585–1642.

XXXVIII.

CARDINAL DE RICHELIEU.

ABSOLUTISM.

CARDINAL DE RICHELIEU is an illustration of what can be done for the prosperity and elevation of a country by a man whom we personally abhor, and whose character is stained by glaring defects and vices. If there was a statesman in French history who was pre-eminently unscrupulous, selfish, tyrannical, and cruel, that statesman was the able and wily priest who ruled France during the latter years of Louis XIII. And yet it would be difficult to find a ruler who has rendered more signal services to the state or to the monarch whom he served. He extricated France from the perils of anarchy, and laid the foundation for the grandeur of the monarchy under Louis XIV. It was his mission to create a strong government, when only a strong government could save the kingdom from disintegration; so that absolutism, much as we detest it, seems to have been one of the needed forces of the seventeenth century.

It was needed in France, to restrain the rapacity and curtail the overgrown power of feudal nobles, whose cabals and treasons were fatal to the interests of law and order.

The assassination of Henry IV. was a great calamity. The government fell into the hands of his widow, Marie de Médicis, a weak and frivolous woman. Under her regency all kinds of evils accumulated. So many conflicting interests and animosities existed that there was little short of anarchy. There were not popular insurrections and rebellions, for the people were ignorant, and were in bondage to their feudal masters; but the kingdom was rent by the rivalries and intrigues of the great nobles, who, no longer living in their isolated castles but in the precincts of the court, fought duels in the streets, plundered the royal treasury, robbed jewellers and coachmakers, paid no debts, and treated the people as if they were dogs or cattle. They claimed all the great offices of state, and all high commands in the army and navy; sold justice, tampered with the law, quarrelled with the parliaments,—indeed, were a turbulent, haughty, and powerful aristocracy, who felt that they were above all law and all restraint. They were not only engaged in perpetual intrigues, but even in treasonable correspondence with the enemies of their country. They disregarded the honor of the kingdom, and attempted to divide it into

principalities for their children. "The Guises wished to establish themselves in Provence, the Montmorencies in Languedoc, the Longuevilles in Picardy. The Duke of Epernon sought to retain the sovereignty of Guienne, and the Duke of Vendôme to secure the sovereignty of Brittany." One wanted to be constable, another admiral, a third to be governor of a province, in order to tyrannize and enrich themselves like Roman proconsuls. Every outrage was shamelessly perpetrated by them with impunity, because they were too powerful to be punished. They assassinated their enemies, filled the cities with their armed retainers, and made war even on the government; so that all central power was a mockery. The Queen-regent was humiliated and made contemptible, and was forced, in her turn and in self-defence, to intrigues and cabals, and sought protection by setting the nobles up against each other, and thus dividing their forces. Even the parliaments, which were courts of law, were full of antiquated prejudices, and sought only to secure their own privileges, — at one time siding with the Queen-regent, and then with the factious nobles. The Huguenots were the best people of the land; but they were troublesome, since they possessed cities and fortresses, and erected an *imperium in imperio*. In their synods and assemblies they usurped the attributes of secular rulers, and discussed questions of peace and war. They entered

into formidable conspiracies, and fomented the troubles and embarrassments of the government. The abjuration of Henry IV. had thinned their ranks and deprived them of court influence. No great leaders remained, since they had been seduced by fashion. The Huguenots were a disappointed and embittered party, hard to please, and hard to be governed; full of fierce resentments, and soured by old recollections. They had obtained religious liberty, but with this they were not contented. Their spirit was not unlike that of the Jacobins in England after the Stuarts were expelled from the throne. So all things combined to produce a state of anarchy and discontent. Feudalism had done its work. It was a good thing on the dissolution of the Roman Empire, when society was resolved into its original elements, — when barbarism on the one hand, and superstition on the other, made the Middle Ages funereal, dismal, violent, despairing. But commerce, arts, and literature had introduced a new era, — still unformed, a vast chaos of conflicting forces, and yet redeemed by reviving intelligence and restless daring. The one thing which society needed in that transition period was a strong government in the hands of kings, to restore law and develop national resources.

Now amid all these evils Richelieu grew up. Under the guise of levity and pleasure and good-nature, he

studied and comprehended all these parties and factions, and hated them all. All alike were hostile to the central power, which he saw was necessary to the preservation of law and to the development of the resources of the country.

Moreover, he was ambitious of power himself, which he loved as Michael Angelo loved art, and Palestrina loved music. Power was his master-passion, and consumed all other passions; and he resolved to gain it in any way he could, — unscrupulously, by flatteries, by duplicities, by sycophancies, by tricks, by lies, even by services. That was his end. He cared nothing for means. He was a politician.

The progress of his elevation is interesting, but hideous. Armand Jean Duplessis was born in 1585, of a noble family of high rank. He was designed for the army, but a bishopric falling to the gift of his family, he was made a priest. He early distinguished himself in his studies, for he was precocious and had great abilities. At twenty he was doctor of the Sorbonne, and before he was twenty-one he received from the Pope, Paul V., the emblems of spiritual power as a prelate of the Church. But he was too young to be made a bishop, according to the canons, — a difficulty, however, which he easily surmounted: he told a lie to the Pope, and then begged for an absolution. He then attached himself to the worthless favorite of the Queen-

regent, Concini, one of her countrymen; and through him to the Queen herself, Marie de Médicis, who told him her secrets, which he betrayed when it suited his interests. When Louis XIII. attained his majority, Richelieu paid his court to De Luynes, who was then all-powerful with the King, and who secured him a cardinal's hat; and when this miserable favorite died, — this falconer, this keeper of birds, yet duke, peer, governor, and minister, — Richelieu wound himself around the King, Louis XIII., the most impotent of all the Bourbons, made himself necessary, and became minister of foreign affairs; and his great rule began (1624).

During all these seventeen years of office-climbing, Richelieu was to all appearance the most amiable man in France; everybody liked him, and everybody trusted him. He was full of amenities, promises, bows, smiles, and flatteries. He always advocated the popular side with reigning favorites; courted all the great ladies; was seen in all the fashionable salons; had no offensive opinions; was polite to everybody; was non-committal; fond of games and spectacles; frivolous among fools, learned among scholars; grave among functionaries, devout among prelates; cunning as a fox, brave as a lion, supple as a dog; all things to all men; an Alcibiades, a Jesuit; with no apparent animosities; handsome, witty, brilliant;

preacher, courtier, student; as full of hypocrisy as an egg is of meat; with eyes wide open, and thoughts disguised; all eyes and no heart; reserved or communicative as it suited his purpose. This was that arch-intriguer who was seeking all the while, not the sceptre of the King, but the power of the King. Should you say that this non-committal, agreeable, and amiable politician — who quarrelled with nobody, and revealed nothing to anybody; who had cheated all parties by turns — was the man to save France, to extricate his country from all the evils to which I have alluded, to build up a great throne (even while he who sat upon it was utterly contemptible) and make that throne the first in Europe, and to establish absolutism as one of the needed forces of the seventeenth century?

Yet so it was; and his work was all the more difficult when the character of the King is considered. Louis XIII. was a different kind of man from his father Henry IV. and his grandson Louis XIV. He had no striking characteristics but feebleness and timidity and love of ignoble pleasures. He had no ambitions or powerful passions; was feeble and sickly from a child, — ruled at one time by his mother, and then by a falconer; and apparently taking but little interest in affairs of state.

But if it was difficult to gain ascendency over such a frivolous and inglorious Sardanapalus, it was easy to

retain it when this ascendency was once acquired. For Richelieu made him comprehend the dangers which menaced his life and his throne; that some very able man must be intrusted with supreme delegated power, who would rule for the benefit of him he served, — a servant, and yet a master; like Metternich in Austria, after the wars of Napoleon, — a man whose business and aim were to exalt absolutism on a throne. Moreover, he so complicated public affairs that his services were indispensable. Nobody could fill his place.

Also, it must be remembered that the King was isolated, and without counsellors whom he could trust. After the death of De Luynes he had no bosom friend. He was surrounded with perplexities and secret enemies. His mother, who had been regent, defied his authority; his brothers sought to wear his crown; the nobles conspired against his throne; the Protestants theatened another civil war; the parliaments thought only of retaining their privileges; the finances were disordered; the treasures which Henry IV. had accumulated had been squandered in bribing the great nobles; foreign enemies had invaded the soil of France; evils and dangers were accumulating on every side, with such terrific force as to jeopardize the very existence of the monarchy; and one necessity became apparent, even to the weak mind of the King, — that he must delegate

his power to some able man, who, though he might rule unscrupulously and tyrannically, would yet be faithful to the crown, and establish the central power for the benefit of his heirs and the welfare of the state.

Now Richelieu was just the man he needed, just such a man as the times required, — a man raised up to do important work, like Cromwell in England, like Bismarck in Prussia, like Cavour in Italy: doubtless a great hypocrite, yet sincere in the conviction that a strong government was the great necessity of his country; a great scoundrel, yet a patriotic and wise statesman, who loved his country with the ardor of a Mirabeau, while nobody loved him. Besides, he loved absolutism, both because he was by nature a tyrant, and because he was a member of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. He called to mind old Rome under the Cæsars, and mediæval Rome under the popes, and what a central authority had effected for civilization in times of anarchy, and in times of darkness and superstition; and the King to him was a sort of vicegerent of divine power, clothed in authority based on divine right, — the idea of kings in the Middle Ages. The state was his, to be managed as a man manages his farm, — as a South Carolinian once managed his slaves. The idea that political power properly emanates from the people, — the idea of Rousseau and

Jefferson, — never once occurred to him; nor even political power in the hands of aristocrats, fettered by a constitution and amenable to the nation. A constitutional monarchy existed nowhere, except perhaps in England. Unrestricted and absolute power in the hands of a king was the only government he believed in. The king might be feeble, in which case he could delegate his power to ministers; or he might be imbecile, in which case he might be virtually dethroned; but his royal rights were sacred, his authority incontestable, and consecrated by all usage and precedent.

Yet while Richelieu would uphold the authority of the crown as supreme and absolute, he would not destroy the prestige of the aristocracy; for he was a nobleman himself, — he belonged to their class. He believed in caste, in privileges, in monopolies; therefore he would not annul either rank or honor. The nobles were welcome to retain their stars and orders and ribbons and heraldic distinctions, even their parks and palaces and falcons and hounds. They were a favored class, that feudalism had introduced and ages had indorsed; but even they must be subservient to the crown, from which their honors emanated, and hence to order and law, of which the king was the keeper. They must be subjects of the government, as well as allies and supporters. The government was royal, not aristocratic. The privileges of the nobility were social rather than

political, although the great offices of state were intrusted to them as a favor, not as a right, — as simply servants of a royal master, whose interests they were required to defend. Some of them were allied by blood with the sovereign, and received marks of his special favor; but their authority was derived from him.

Richelieu was not unpatriotic. He wished to see France powerful, united, and prosperous; but powerful as a monarchy, united under a king, and prosperous for the benefit of the privileged orders, — not for the plebeian people, who toiled for supercilious masters. The people were of no account politically; were as unimportant as slaves, — to be protected in life and property, that they might thrive for the benefit of those who ruled them.

So when Richelieu became prime minister, and felt secure in his seat, — knowing how necessary to the King his services were, — he laid aside his amiable manners as a politician, and determined as a statesman to carry out remorselessly and rigidly his plans for the exaltation of the monarchy. And the moment he spoke at the council-board his genius predominated; all saw that a great power had arisen, that he was a master, and would be obeyed, and would execute his plans with no sentimentalities, but coldly, fixedly, like a man of blood and iron, indifferent to all obstacles. He was a man who could rule, and therefore,

on Carlyle's theory, a man who ought to rule, because he was strong.

There is something imposing, I grant, in this executive strength; it does not make a man interesting, but it makes him feared. Every ruler, — in fact every man intrusted with executive power, especially in stormy times, — should be resolute, unflinching, with a will dominating over everything, with courage, pluck, backbone, be he king or prime minister, or the superintendent of a railway, or director of a lunatic asylum, or president of a college. No matter whether the sphere be large or small, the administration of power requires energy, will, promptness of action, without favor and without fear. And if such a person rules well he will be respected; but if he rules unwisely, — if capricious, unjust, cruel, vindictive, — he may be borne for a while, until patience is exhausted and indignation becomes terrible: a passion of vengeance, like that which overthrew Strafford. Wise tyrants, like Peter and Frederic the Great, will be endured, from their devotion to public interests; but unwise tyrants, ruling for self-interest or pleasure, will be hurled from power, or assassinated like Nero or Commodus, as the only way to get rid of the miseries they inflict.

Now of the class of wise and enlightened tyrants was Richelieu. His greatness was in his will, sagacity, watchfulness, and devotion to public affairs. Factions

could not oust him, because he was strong; the King would not part with him, because he was faithful; posterity will not curse him, because he laid the foundation of the political greatness of his country.

I do not praise his system of government. On abstract principles I feel that it is against the liberties of mankind; nor is it in accordance with the progress of government in our modern times. All the successive changes which reforms and revolutions have wrought have been towards representative and constitutional governments, — as in England and France in the nineteenth century. Absolutism or Cæsarism is only adapted to people in primitive or anarchical states of society, — as in old Rome, or Rome under the popes. It is at the best a necessary tyranny, made so by the disorders and evils of life. It can be commended only when men are worse than governments; when they are to be coerced like wild beasts, or lunatics, or scoundrels. When there is universal plunder, lying, cheating, and murdering; when laws are a mockery, and when demagogues reign; when all public interests are scandalously sacrificed for private emolument, — then absolutism may for a time be necessary; but only for a time, unless we assume that men can never govern themselves.

In that state of society into which France was plunged during the regency of Marie de Médicis, and

at which I have glanced, absolutism was perhaps a needed force. Then Richelieu, its great modern representative, arose, — a model statesman in the eyes of Peter the Great.

But he was not to reign, and trample all other powers beneath his feet, without a memorable struggle. Three great forces were arrayed against him. These were the Huguenots, the nobles, and the parliaments, — the Protestant, the feudal, and the legal elements of society in France. The people, — at least the peasantry, — did not rise up against him; they were powerless and too unenlightened. The priests sustained him, and the common people acquiesced in his rigid rule, for he established law and order.

He began his labors in behalf of absolutism by suppressing the Huguenots. That was the only political party which was urgent for its rights. They were an intelligent party of tradesmen and small farmers; they were plebeian, but conscientious and aspiring. They were not contented alone to worship God according to the charter which Henry IV. had granted, but they sought political power; and they were so unfortunate as to be guilty of cabals and intrigues inconsistent with a central power. They were factious, and were not disposed to submit to legitimate authority. They had declined in numbers and influence; they had even degenerated in religious life; but they were still

powerful and dangerous foes. They had retreated to their strong fortress of La Rochelle, resolved, if attacked, to fight once again the whole power of the monarchy. They put themselves in a false position; they wanted more than the Edict of Nantes had guaranteed.

Unfortunately for them they had no leaders worthy to marshal their forces. Fashion and the influence of the court had seduced their men of rank; nor had they the enthusiasm which had secured victory at Ivry. Nor could they contend openly in the field; they were obliged to intrench themselves in an impregnable fortress: there they deemed they could defy their enemy. They even invoked the aid of England, and thus introduced foreign enemies on the soil of France, which was high-treason. They put themselves in the attitude of rebels against the government; and so long as English ships, with supplies, could go in and out of their harbor, they could not be conquered. Richelieu, clad in mail, a warrior-priest, surveyed with disgust their strong defences and their open harbor. His artillery was of no use, nor his lines of circumvallation. So he put his brain in motion, and studied Quintus Curtius. He remembered what Alexander did at the siege of Tyre; he constructed a vast dyke of stone and timber and iron across the harbor, in some places twelve hundred feet deep, and thus cut off all egress

and ingress. The English under Buckingham departed, unable to render further assistance. The capture then was only a work of time; genius had hemmed the city in, and famine soon did the rest. Cats, dogs, and vermin became luxuries. The starving women beseeched the inexorable enemy for permission to retire: they remembered the mercy that Henry IV. had shown at the siege of Paris. But war in the hands of masters has no favors to grant; conquerors have no tears. The Huguenots, as rebels, had no hope but in unconditional submission. They yielded it reluctantly, but not until famine had done its work. And they never raised their heads again; their spirit was broken. They were conquered, and at the mercy of the crown; destined in the next reign to be cruelly and most wantonly persecuted; hunted as heretics by dragonnades and executioners, at the bidding of Louis XIV., until four hundred thousand were executed or driven from the kingdom.

But Richelieu was not such a bigot as Louis XIV.; he was a statesman, and took enlightened views of the welfare of the country. Therefore he contented himself with destroying the fortifications of La Rochelle, filling up its ditches, and changing its government. He continued, in a modified form, the religious privileges conceded by the Edict of Nantes; but he kept a strict watch, humiliated the body by withholding civil

equalities and offices in the army and navy, treating with disdain their ministers, and taking away their social rank, so that they became plebeian and unimportant. He pursued the same course that the English government adopted in reference to Dissenters in the eighteenth century, when they were excluded from Oxford and Cambridge and church burial-grounds. So that Protestantism in France, after the fall of La Rochelle, never asserted its dignity, in spite of Bibles, consistories, and schools. Degraded at court, deprived of the great offices of the state, despised, rejected, and persecuted, it languished and declined.

Having subdued the Huguenots, Richelieu turned his attention to the nobles,—the most worthless, arrogant, and powerful of all the nobility of Europe; men who made royalty a mockery and law a name. I have alluded to their intrigues, ambition, and insolence. It was necessary that they should be humiliated, decimated, and punished, if central power was to be respected. So he cut off their towering heads, exiled and imprisoned them whenever they violated the laws, or threatened the security of the throne or the peace of the realm. As individuals they hated him, and conspired against his rule. Had they combined, they would have been more powerful than he; but they were too quarrelsome, envious, and short-sighted to combine.

The person who hated Richelieu most fiercely and bitterly was the Queen-mother, — widow of Henry IV., regent during the minority of Louis XIII. And no wonder, for he had cheated her and betrayed her. She was a very formidable enemy, having a great ascendency over the mind of her son the King; and once, it is said, she had so powerfully wrought upon him by her envenomed sarcasms, in the palace of the Luxembourg where she lived in royal state, that the King had actually taken the parchment in his hand to sign the disgrace of his minister. But he was watched by an eye that never slept; Richelieu suddenly appearing, at the critical moment, from behind the tapestries where he had concealed himself, fronted and defied his enemy. The King, bewildered, had not nerve enough to face his own servant, who however made him comprehend the dangers which surrounded his throne and person, and compelled him to part with his mother, — the only woman he ever loved, — and without permitting her to imprint upon his brow her own last farewell. "And the world saw the extraordinary spectacle of this once powerful Queen, the mother of a long line of kings, compelled to lead a fugitive life from court to court, — repulsed from England by her son-in-law, refused a shelter in Holland, insulted by Spain, neglected by Rome, and finally obliged to crave an asylum from Rubens the painter,

and, driven from one of his houses, forced to hide herself in Cologne, where, deserted by all her children, and so reduced by poverty as to break up the very furniture of her room for fuel, she perished miserably between four empty walls, on a wretched bed, destitute, helpless, heartbroken, and alone." Such was the power and such was the vengeance of the cardinal on the highest personage in France. Such was the dictation of a priest to a king who personally disliked him; such was his ascendency, not by Druidical weapons, but by genius presenting reasons of state.

The next most powerful personage in France was the Duke of Orleans, brother of the King, who sought to steal his sceptre. As he was detected in treasonable correspondence with Spain, he became a culprit, but was spared after making a humiliating confession and submission. But Condé, the first prince of the blood, was shut up in prison, and the powerful Duke of Guise was exiled. Richelieu took away from the Duke of Bouillon his sovereignty of Sedan; forced the proud Epernon to ask pardon on his knees; drove away from the kingdom the Duke of Vendôme, natural brother of the King; executed the Duke of Montmorency, whose family traced an unbroken lineage to Pharamond; confined Marshal Bassompièrre to the Bastile; arrested Marshal Marillac at the head of a conquering army; cut off the head of Cinq-Mars, grand equerry and

favorite of the King; and executed on the scaffold the Counts of Chalais and Bouteville. All these men were among the proudest and most powerful nobles in Europe; they all lived like princes, and had princely revenues and grand offices, but had been caught with arms in their hands, or in treasonable correspondence. What hope for ordinary culprits when the proudest feudal nobles were executed or exiled, like common malefactors? Neither rank nor services could screen them from punishment. The great minister had no mercy and no delay even for the favorites of royalty. Nay, the King himself became his puppet, and was forced to part with his friends, his family, his mistresses, and his pleasures. Some of the prime-ministers of kings have had as much power as Richelieu, but no minister, before or since, has ruled the monarch himself with such an iron sway. How weak the King, or how great the minister!

The third great force which Richelieu crushed was the parliament of Paris. It had the privilege of registering the decrees of the King; and hence was a check, the only check, on royal authority, — unless the King came in person into the assembly, and enforced his decree by what was called a "bed of justice." This body, however, was judicial rather than legislative; made up of pedantic and aristocratic lawyers, who could be troublesome. We get some idea of the humiliation

of this assembly of lawyers and nobles from the speech of Omer Talon, — the greatest lawyer of the realm, — when called upon to express the sentiments of his illustrious body to the King, at a "bed of justice": "Happy should we be, most gracious sovereign, if we could obtain any favor worthy of the honor which we derive from your majesty's presence; but the entry of your sacred person into our assembly unfits us for our functions. And inasmuch as the throne on which you are seated is a light that dazzles us, bow, if it please you, the heavens which you inhabit, and after the example of the Eternal Sovereign, whose image you bear, condescend to visit us with your gracious mercy."

What a contrast to this servile speech was the conduct of the English parliament about this time, in its memorable resistance to Charles I.; and how different would have been the political destinies of the English people, if Strafford, just such a man as Richelieu, had succeeded in his schemes! But in England the parliament was backed by the nation, — at least by the middle classes. In France the people had then no political aspirations; among them a Cromwell could not have arisen, since a Cromwell could not have been sustained.

Thus Richelieu, by will and genius, conquered all his foes in order to uphold the throne, and thus elevate the nation; for, as Sir James Stephen says, "the grandeur

of the monarchy and the welfare of France with him were but convertible terms." He made the throne the first in Europe, even while he who sat upon it was personally contemptible. He gave lustre to the monarchy, while he himself was an unarmed priest. It was a splendid fiction to make the King nominally so powerful, while really he was so feeble. But royalty was not a fiction under his successor. How respectable did Richelieu make the monarchy! What a deep foundation did he lay for royalty under Louis XIV.! What a magnificent inheritance did he bequeath to that monarch! "Nothing was done for forty years which he had not foreseen and prepared. His successor, Mazarin, only prospered so far as he followed out his instructions; and the star of Louis XIV. did not pale so long as the policy which Richelieu bequeathed was the rule of his public acts." The magnificence of Louis was only the sequel of the energy and genius of Richelieu; Versailles was really the gift of him who built the Palais Royal.

The services of Richelieu to France did not end with centralizing power around the throne. He enlarged the limits of the kingdom and subdued her foreign enemies. Great rivers and mountains became the national boundaries, within which it was easy to preserve conquests. He was not ambitious of foreign domination; he simply wished to make the kingdom impregnable. Had

Napoleon pursued this policy, he could never have been overthrown, and his dynasty would have been established. It was the policy of Elizabeth and of Cromwell. I do not say that Richelieu did not enter upon foreign wars; but it was to restore the "balance of power," not to add kingdoms to the empire. He rendered assistance to Gustavus Adolphus, in spite of the protests of Rome and the disgust of Catholic powers, in order to prevent the dangerous ascendency of Austria; thus setting an example for William III., and Pitt himself, in his warfare against Napoleon. In these days we should prefer to see the "balance of power" maintained by a congress of nations, rather than by vast military preparations and standing armies, which eat out the resources of nations; but in the seventeenth century there was no other way to maintain this balance than by opposing armies. Nor did Richelieu seek to maintain the peace of Europe by force alone. Never was there a more astute and profound diplomatist. His emissaries were in every court, with intrigues very hard to be baffled. He equalled Metternich or Talleyrand in his profound dissimulation, for European diplomacy has ever been based on this. While he built up absolutism in France, he did not alienate other governments; so that, like Cromwell, he made his nation respected abroad. His conquest of Roussillon prepared the way for the famous Treaty of the Pyrenees, under the

administration of Mazarin. While vigorous in war, his policy was on the whole pacific, — like that of all Catholic priests who have held power in France. He loved glory indeed, but, like Sully and Colbert, he also wished to develop the national resources; and, as indeed all enlightened statesmen from Moses downward have sought to do, he wished to make the country strong for defence rather than offence.

He showed great sagacity as well as an enlightened mind. The ablest men were placed in office. The army and navy were reorganized. Corruption and peculation on the part of officials were severely punished. The royal revenue was increased. Roads, bridges, canals were built and repaired, and public improvements were made. The fine arts were encouraged, and even learning was rewarded. It was he who founded the French Academy, — although he excluded from it men of original genius whose views he did not like. Law and order were certainly restored, and anarchy ceased to reign. The rights of property were established, and the finances freed from embarrassments.

So his rigid rule tended to the elevation of France; absolutism proved necessary in his day, and under his circumstances. When arraigned at the bar of posterity, he claims, like Napoleon, to be judged for his services, and not for his defects of character. These defects will forever make him odious in spite of his services. I

hardly know a more repulsive benefactor. He was vain, cold, heartless, rigid, and proud. He had no amiable weakness. His smile was a dagger, and his friendship was a snare. He was a hypocrite and a tyrant. He had no pity on a fallen foe; and even when bending under the infirmities of age, and in the near prospect of death, his inexorable temper was never for a moment subdued. The execution of Cinq-Mars and De Thou took place when he had one foot in his grave. He deceived everybody, sent his spies into the bosom of families, and made expediency the law of his public life.

But it is nothing to the philosophic student of history that he built the Palais Royal, or squandered riches with Roman prodigality, or rewarded players, or enriched Marion Delorme, or clad himself in mail before La Rochelle, or persecuted his early friends, or robbed the monasteries, or made a spy of Father Joseph, or exiled the Queen-mother, or kept the King in bondage, or sent his enemies to the scaffold: these things are all against him, and make him appear in a repulsive light. But if he brought order out of confusion, and gave a blow to feudalism, and destroyed anarchies, and promoted law, and developed the resources of his country, making that country formidable and honorable, and constructed a vast machinery of government by which France was kept together for a century, and

would have fallen to pieces without it, — then there is another way to survey this bad man; and we view him not only as a great statesman and ruler, but as an instrument of Providence, raised up as a terror to evil-doers. We may hate absolutism, but must at the same time remember that there are no settled principles of government, any more than of political economy. That is the best government which is best adapted to the exigency of that human society which at the time it serves. Republicanism would not do in China, any more than despotism in New England. Bad men, somehow or other, must be coerced and punished. The more prevalent is depravity, so much the more necessary is despotic vigor: it will be so to the end of time. It is all nonsense to dream of liberty with a substratum of folly and vice. Unless evils can be remedied by the public itself, giving power to the laws which the people create, then physical force, hard and cold tyranny, must inevitably take the place. No country will long endure anarchy; and then the hardest characters may prove the greatest benefactors.

It is on this principle that I am reconciled to the occasional rule of despots. And when I see a bad man, like Richelieu, grasping power to be used for the good of a nation, I have faith to believe it to be ordered wisely. When men are good and honest and brave, we shall have Washingtons; when they are selfish

and lawless, God will send Richelieus and Napoleons, if He has good things in store for the future, even as He sends Neroes and Diocletians when a nation is doomed to destruction by incurable rottenness.

And yet absolutism in itself is not to be defended; it is what enlightened nations are now striving to abolish. It is needed only under certain circumstances; if it were to be perpetuated in any nation it would be Satanic. It is endurable only because it may be destroyed when it has answered its end; and, like all human institutions, it will become corrupted. It was shamefully abused under Louis XIV. and Louis XV. But when corrupted and abused it has, like slavery, all the elements of certain decay and ruin. The abuse of power will lead to its own destruction, even as undue haste in the acquisition of riches tendeth to poverty.

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XXXIX.

OLIVER CROMWELL.

ENGLISH REVOLUTION.

A. D. 1599–1658.

XXXIX.

OLIVER CROMWELL.

ENGLISH REVOLUTION.

THE most difficult character in history to treat critically, and the easiest to treat rhetorically, perhaps, is Oliver Cromwell; after two centuries and more he is still a puzzle: his name, like that of Napoleon, is a doubt. Some regard him with unmingled admiration; some detest him as a usurper; and many look upon him as a hypocrite. Nobody questions his ability; and his talents were so great that some bow down to him on that account, out of reverence for strength, like Carlyle. On the whole he is a popular idol, not for his strength, but for his cause, since he represents the progressive party in his day in behalf of liberty, — at least until his protectorate began. Then new issues arose; and while he appeared as a great patriot and enlightened ruler, he yet reigned as an absolute monarch, basing his power on a standing army.

But whatever may be said of Cromwell as statesman

general, or ruler, his career was remarkable and exceedingly interesting. His character, too, was unique and original; hence we are never weary of discussing him. In studying his character and career, we also have our minds directed to the great ideas of his tumultuous and agitated age, for he, like Napoleon, was the product of revolution. He was the offspring of mighty ideas, — he did not create them; original thinkers set them in motion, as Rousseau enunciated the ideas which led to the French Revolution. The great thinkers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were divines, the men whom the Reformation produced. It was Luther preaching the right of private judgment, and Calvin pushing out the doctrine of the majesty of God to its remotest logical sequence, and Latimer appealing to every man's personal responsibility to God, and Gustavus Adolphus fighting for religious liberty, and the Huguenots protesting against religious persecution, and Thomas Cromwell sweeping away the abominations of the Papacy, and the Geneva divines who settled in England during the reign of Elizabeth, — it was all these that produced Oliver Cromwell.

He was a Puritan, and hence he was a reformer, not in church matters merely, but in all those things which are connected with civil liberty, — for there is as close a connection between Protestantism and liberty as between Catholicism and absolutism. The Puritans

intensely hated everything which reminded them of Rome, even the holidays of the Church, organs, stained-glass, cathedrals, and the rich dresses of the clergy. They even tried to ignore Christmas and Easter, though consecrated by the early Church. They hated the Middle Ages, looked with disgust upon the past, and longed to try experiments, not only in religion, but in politics and social life. The only antiquity which had authority to them was the Jewish Commonwealth, because it was a theocracy, and recognized God Almighty as the supreme ruler of the world. Hence they adhered to the strictness of the Jewish Sabbath, and baptized their children with Hebrew names.

Now to such a people, stern, lofty, ascetic, legal, spiritual, — conservative of whatever the Bible reveals, yet progressive and ardent for reforms, — the rule of the Stuarts was intolerable. It was intolerable because it seemed to lean towards Catholicism, and because it was tyrannical and averse to changes. The King was ruled by favorites; and these favorites were either bigots in religion, like Archbishop Laud, or were tyrannical or unscrupulous in their efforts to sustain the King in despotic measures and crush popular agitations, like the Earl of Strafford, or were men of pleasure and vanity like the Duke of Buckingham. Charles I. was detested by the Puritans even more than his father James. They looked upon him as more than half a Papist, a

despot, utterly insincere, indifferent to the welfare of the country, intent only on exalting himself and his throne at the expense of the interests of the people, whose aspirations he scorned and whose rights he trampled upon. In his eyes they had no *rights*, only *duties;* and duties to him as an anointed sovereign, to rule as he liked, with parliaments or without parliaments; yea, to impose taxes arbitrarily, and grant odious monopolies: for the State was his, to be managed as a man would manage a farm; and those who resisted this encroachment on the liberties of the nation were to be fined, imprisoned, executed, as pestilent disturbers of the public peace. He would form dangerous alliances with Catholic powers, marry his children to Catholic princes, appoint Catholics to high office, and compromise the dignity of the nation as a Protestant State. His ministers, his judges, his high officials were simply his tools, and perpetually insulted the nation by their arrogance, their venality, and their shameful disregard of the Constitution. In short, he seemed bent on imposing a tyrannical yoke, hard to be endured, and to punish unlawfully those who resisted it, or even murmured against it. He would shackle the press, and muzzle the members of parliament.

Thus did this King appear to the Puritans, — at this time a large and influential party, chiefly Presbyterian, and headed by many men of rank and character, all

of whom detested the Roman Catholic religion as the source of all religious and political evils, and who did not scruple to call the Papacy by the hardest names, such as the "Scarlet Mother," "Antichrist," and the like. They had seceded from the Established Church in the reign of Elizabeth, and became what was then called Non-conformists. Had they been treated wisely, had any respect been shown to their opinions and rights, — for the right of worshipping God according to individual conscience is the central and basal pillar of Protestantism, — had this undoubted right of private judgment, the great emancipating idea of that age, been respected, the Puritans would have sought relief in constitutional resistance, for they were conservative and loyal, as English people ever have been, even in Canada and Australia. They were not bent on *revolution;* they only desired *reform.* So their representatives in Parliament framed the famous "Petition of Rights," in which were reasserted the principles of constitutional liberty. This earnest, loyal, but angry Parliament, being troublesome, was dissolved, and Charles undertook for eleven years to reign without one, — against all precedents, — with Strafford and Laud for his chief advisers and ministers. He reigned by Star-chamber decrees, High-commission courts, issuing proclamations, resorting to forced loans, tampering with justice, removing judges, imprisoning obnoxious

men without trial, insulting and humiliating the Puritans, and openly encouraging a religion of "millineries and upholsteries," not only illegally, but against the wishes and sentiments of the better part of the nation,— thus undermining his own throne; for all thrones are based on the love of the people.

The financial difficulties of the King — for the most absolute of kings cannot extort *all* the money they want — compelled him to assemble another Parliament at an alarming crisis of popular indignation which he did not see, when popular leaders began to say that even kings must rule *by* the people and not *without* the people.

This new Parliament, with Hampden and Pym for leaders, though fierce and aggressive, would have been contented with constitutional reform, like Mirabeau at one period. But the King, ill-advised, obstinate, blinded, would not accept reform; he would reign like the Bourbons, or not at all. The reforms which the Parliament desired were reasonable and just. It would abolish arbitrary arrests, the Star-chamber decrees, taxes without its consent, cruelty to Nonconformists, the ascendency of priests, irresponsible ministers, and offensive symbols of Romanism. If these reforms had been granted, — and such a sovereign as Elizabeth would have yielded, however reluctantly, — there would have been no English revo-

lution. Or even if the popular leaders had been more patient, and waited for their time, and been willing to carry out these reforms constitutionally, there would have been no revolution. But neither the King nor Parliament would yield, and the Parliament was dissolved.

The next Parliament was not only angry, it was defiant and unscrupulous. It resolved on revolution, and determined to put the King himself aside. It began with vigorous measures, and impeached both Laud and Strafford, — doubtless very able men, but not fitted for their times. It decreed sweeping changes, usurped the executive authority, appealed to arms, and made war on the government. The King also on his part appealed to the sword, which now alone could settle the difficulties. The contest was inevitable. The nation clamored for reform; the King would not grant it; the Parliament would not wait to secure it constitutionally. Both parties were angry and resolute; reason departed from the councils of the nation; passion now ruled, and civil war began. It was not, at first, a question about the form of government, — whether a king or an elected ruler should bear sway; it was purely a question of reforms in the existing government, limiting of course the power of the King, — but reforms deemed so vital to the welfare of the nation that the best people were willing to shed their blood to secure them; and

if reason and moderation could have borne sway, that angry strife might have been averted. But people will not listen to reason in times of maddening revolution; they prefer to fight, and run their chances and incur the penalty. And when contending parties appeal to the sword, then all ordinary rules are set aside, and success belongs to the stronger, and the victors exact what they please. The rules of all deadly and desperate warfare seem to recognize this.

The fortune of war put the King into the hands of the revolutionists; and in fear, more than in vengeance, they executed him, — just what he would have done to *their* leaders if *he* had won. "Stone-dead," said Faulkland, "hath no fellow." In a national conflagration we lose sight of laws, even of written constitutions. Great necessities compel extraordinary measures, not such as are sustained either by reason or precedents. The great lesson of war, especially of civil war, is, that contending parties might better make great concessions than resort to it, for it is certain to demoralize a nation. Heated partisans hate compromise; yet war itself generally ends in compromise. It is interesting to see how many constitutions, how many institutions in both Church and State, are based on compromise.

Now, it was amid all the fierce contentions of that revolutionary age, — an age of intense earnestness,

when the grandest truths were agitated; an age of experiment, of bold discussions, of wild fanaticisms, of bitter hatreds, of unconquerable prejudices, yet of great loftiness and spiritual power, — that the star of Oliver Cromwell arose. He was born in the year 1599, of a good family. He was a country squire, a gentleman farmer, though not much given to fox-hunting or dinner hilarities, preferring to read political pamphlets, or to listen to long sermons, or to hold discussions on grace, predestination, free-will, and foreknowledge absolute. His favorite doctrine was the second coming of Christ and the reign of the saints, the elect, — to whom of course he belonged. He had visions and rhapsodies, and believed in special divine illumination. Cromwell was not a Presbyterian, but an Independent; and the Independents were the most advanced party of his day, both in politics and religion. The progressive man of that age was a Calvinist, in all the grandeur and in all the narrowness of that unfashionable and misunderstood creed. The time had not come for "advanced thinkers" to repudiate a personal God and supernatural agencies. Then an atheist, or even a deist, and indeed a materialist of the school of Democritus and Lucretius, was unknown. John Milton was one of the representative men of the Puritans of the seventeenth century, — men who colonized New England, and planted the germs of institutions which have spread to the Rocky Mountains.

Cromwell on his farm, one of the landed gentry, had a Cambridge education, and was early an influential man. His sagacity, his intelligence, his honesty, and his lofty religious life marked him out as a fit person to represent his county in parliament. He at once became the associate of such men as Hampden and Pym. He did not make very graceful speeches, and he had an ungainly person; but he was eloquent in a rude way, since he had strong convictions and good sense. He was probably violent, for he hated the abuses of the times, and he hated Rome and the prelacy. He represented the extreme left; that is, he was a radical, and preferred revolution to tyranny. Yet even he would probably have accepted reform if reform had been possible without violence. But Cromwell had no faith in the King or his ministers, and was inclined to summary measures. He afterwards showed this tendency of character in his military career. He was one of those earnest and practical people who could not be fooled with. So he became a leader of those who were most violent against the Government. During the Long Parliament, Cromwell sat for Cambridge; which fact shows that he was then a marked man, far from being unimportant. This was the Parliament, assembled in 1640, which impeached Strafford and Laud, which abolished the Star-chamber, and inaugurated the civil war, that began when Charles

left Whitehall, January, 1642, for York. The Parliament solicited contributions, called out the militia, and appointed to the command of the forces the Earl of Essex, a Presbyterian, who established his headquarters at Northampton, while Charles unfurled the royal standard at Nottingham.

Cromwell was forty-two when he buckled on his sword as a volunteer. He subscribed five hundred pounds to the cause of liberty, raised a troop of horse, which gradually swelled into that famous regiment of one thousand men, called "Ironsides," which was never beaten. Of this regiment he was made colonel in the spring of 1643. He had distinguished himself at Edgehill in the first year of the war, but he drew upon himself the eyes of the nation at the battle of Marston Moor, July, 1644, — gained by the discipline of his men, — which put the north of England into the hands of Parliament. He was then lieutenant-general, second in command to the Earl of Manchester. The undecisive battle of Newbury, in October, furnished Cromwell, then one of the most influential members of Parliament, an occasion to complain of the imbecility of the noblemen who controlled the army, and who were Presbyterians. The "self-denying ordinance," which prohibited members of Parliament from command in the army, was a blow at Presbyterianism and aristocracy, and marked the growing power of the Independents. It

was planned by Cromwell, although it would have deprived him also of his command; but he was made an exception to the rule, and he knew he would be, since his party could not spare him.

Then was fought the battle of Naseby, June 14, 1645, in which Cromwell commanded the right wing of the army, Fairfax (nominally his superior general) the centre, and Ireton the left; against Prince Rupert and Charles. The battle was won by the bravery of Cromwell, and decided the fortunes of the King, although he was still able to keep the field. Cromwell now became the foremost man in England. For two years he resided chiefly in London, taking an important part in negotiations with the King, and in the contest between the Independents and Presbyterians, — the former of which represented the army, while the latter still had the ascendency in Parliament.

On the 16th of August, 1648, was fought the battle of Preston, in which Cromwell defeated the Scotch army commanded by the Duke of Hamilton, which opened Edinburgh to his victorious troops, and made him commander-in-chief of the armies of the Commonwealth. The Presbyterians, at least of Scotland, it would seem, preferred now the restoration of the King to the ascendency of Cromwell with the army to back him, for it was the army and not the Parliament which had given him supreme command.

Then followed the rapid conquest of the Scots, the return of the victorious general to London, and the suppression of the liberty of Parliament, for it was purged of its Presbyterian leaders. The ascendency of the Independents began; for though in a minority, they were backed by an army which obeyed implicitly the commands and even the wishes of Cromwell.

The great tragedy which disgraced the revolution was now acted. The unfortunate King, whose fate was sealed at the battle of Naseby, after various vicissitudes and defeats, put himself into the hands of the Scots and made a league with the Presbyterians. After Edinburgh was taken, they virtually sold him to the victor, who caused him to be brought in bitter mockery to Hampton Court, where he was treated with ironical respect. In his reverses Charles would have made *any* concessions; and the Presbyterians, who first took up arms against him, would perhaps have accepted them. But it was too late. Cromwell and the Independents now reigned, — a party that had been driven into violent measures, and which had sought the subversion of the monarchy itself.

Charles is brought to a mock trial by a decimated Parliament, is condemned and executed, and the old monarchy is supplanted by a military despotism. "The roaring conflagration of anarchies" is succeeded by the rule of the strongest man.

Much has been written and said about that execution, or martyrdom, or crime, as it has been variously viewed by partisans. It simply was the sequence of the revolution, of the appeal of both parties to the sword. It may have been necessary or unnecessary, a blunder or a crime, but it was the logical result of a bitter war; it was the cruel policy of a conquering power. Those who supported it were able men, who deemed it the wisest thing to do; who dreaded a reaction, who feared for themselves, and sought by this means to perpetuate their sway. As one of the acts of revolution, it must be judged by the revolution itself. The point is, not whether it was wrong to take the life of the King, if it were a military necessity, or seemed to be to the great leaders of the day, but whether it was right to take up arms in defence of rights which might have been gained by protracted constitutional agitation and resistance. The execution proved a blunder, because it did not take away the rights of Charles II., and created great abhorrence and indignation, not merely in foreign countries, but among a majority of the English people themselves, — and these, too, who had the prestige of wealth and culture. I do not believe the Presbyterian party, as represented by Hampden and Pym, and who like Mirabeau had applied the torch to revolutionary passions, would have consented to this foolish murder. Certainly the Episcopalians would not

have executed Charles, even if they could have been induced to cripple him.

But war is a conflagration; nothing can stop its ravages when it has fairly begun. They who go to war must abide the issue of war; they who take the sword must be prepared to perish by the sword. Thus far, in the history of the world, very few rights have been gained by civil war which could not have been gained in the end without it. The great rights which the people have secured in England for two hundred years are the result of an appeal to reason and justice. The second revolution was bloodless. The Parliament which first arrayed itself against the government of Charles was no mean foe, even if it had not resorted to arms. It held the purse-strings; it had the power to cripple the King, and to worry him into concessions. But if the King was resolved to attack the Parliament itself, and coerce it by a standing army, and destroy all liberty in England, then the question assumed another shape; the war then became defensive, and was plainly justifiable, and Charles could but accept the issue, even his own execution, if it seemed necessary to his conquerors. They took up arms in self-defence, and war, of course, brought to light the energies and talents of the greatest general, who as victor would have his reward. Cromwell concluded to sweep away the old monarchy, and reign himself

instead; and the execution of the King was one of his war measures. It was the penalty Charles paid for making war on his subjects, instead of ruling them according to the laws. His fate was hard and sad; we feel more compassion than indignation. In our times he would have been permitted to run away; but those stern and angry old revolutionists demanded his blood.

For this cruel or necessary act Cromwell is responsible more than any man in England, since he could have prevented it if he pleased. He ruled the army, which ruled the Parliament. It was not the nation, or the representatives of the nation, who decreed the execution of Charles. It was the army and the purged Parliament, composed chiefly of Independents, who wanted the subversion of the monarchy itself. Technically, Charles was tried by the Parliament, or the judges appointed by them; really, Cromwell was at the bottom of the affair, as much as John Calvin was responsible for the burning of Servetus, let partisans say what they please. There never has a great crime or blunder been committed on this earth which bigoted, or narrow, or zealous partisans have not attempted to justify. Bigoted Catholics have justified even the slaughter of St. Bartholomew. Partisans have no law but expediency. All jesuits, political, religious, and social, in the Catholic and Protestant

churches alike, seem to think that the end justifies the means, even in the most beneficent reforms: and when pushed to the wall by the logic of opponents, will fall back on the examples of the Old Testament. In defence of lying and cheating they will quote Abraham at the court of Pharaoh. There is no insult to the human understanding more flagrant, than the doctrine that we may do evil that good may come. And yet the politics and reforms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seem to have been based on that miserable form of jesuitism. Here Machiavelli is as vulnerable as Escobar, and Burleigh as well as Oliver Cromwell, who was not more profound in dissimulation than Queen Elizabeth herself. The best excuse we can render for the political and religious crimes of that age is, that they were in accordance with its ideas. And who is superior to the ideas of his age?

On the execution of the King, the supreme authority was nominally in the hands of Parliament. Of course all kinds of anarchies prevailed, and all government was unsettled. Charles II. was proclaimed King by the Scots, while the Duke of Ormond, in Ireland, joined the royal party to seat Charles II. on the throne. In this exigency Cromwell was appointed by the Parliament Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland.

Then followed the conquest of Ireland, in which

Cromwell distinguished himself for great military abilities. His vigorous and uncompromising measures, especially his slaughter of the garrison of Drogheda (a retaliatory act), have been severely commented on. But war in the hands of masters is never carried on sentimentally: the test of ability is success. The measures were doubtless hard and severe; but Cromwell knew what he was about: he wished to bring the war to a speedy close, and intimidation was probably the best course to pursue. Those impracticable Irish never afterwards molested him. In less than a year he was at leisure to oppose Charles II. in Scotland; and on the resignation of Fairfax he was made Captain-General of all the forces in the empire. The battle of Dunbar resulted in the total defeat of the Scots; while the "crowning mercy" at Worcester, Sept. 3, 1651, utterly blasted the hopes of Charles, and completely annihilated his forces.

The civil war, which raged nine years, was now finished, and Cromwell became supreme. But even the decimated Parliament was jealous, and raised an issue,—on which Cromwell dissolved it with a file of soldiers, and assembled another, neither elective nor representative, composed of his creatures, without experience, chiefly Anabaptists and Independents; which he soon did away with. He then called a council of leading men, who made him Lord Protector, December 13,

1653. Even the shadow of constitutional authority now vanishes, and Cromwell rules with absolute and untrammelled power, like Julius Cæsar or Napoleon Bonaparte. He rules on the very principles which he condemned in Charles I. The revolution ends in a military despotism.

If there was ever a usurpation, this was one. Liberty gave her last sigh on the remonstrance of Sir Harry Vane, and a military hero, by means of his army, stamps his iron heel on England. He dissolves the very body from which he received his own authority he refuses to have any check on his will; he imposes taxes without the consent of the people, — the very thing for which he took up arms against Charles I.; he reigns alone, on despotic principles, as absolute as Louis XIV.; he enshrouds himself in royal state at Hampton Court; he even seeks to bequeath his absolute power to his son. And if Richard Cromwell had reigned like his father Oliver, then the cause of liberty would have been lost.

All this is cold, unvarnished history. We cannot get over or around these facts; they blaze out to the eyes of all readers, and will blaze to the most distant ages. Cromwell began as a reformer, but ended as a usurper. Whatever name he goes by, whatever title he may have assumed, he became, by force of his victories and of his army, the absolute ruler of England, — as

Cæsar did of Rome, and Napoleon of Paris. We may palliate or extenuate this fact; we may even excuse it on the ground that the State had drifted into anarchy; that only he, as the stronger man, could save England; that there was no other course open to him as a patriot; and that it was a most fortunate thing for England that he seized the reins, and became a tyrant to put down anarchies. But whatever were the excuses by which Cromwell justified himself, or his admirers justify him, let us not deny the facts. It may have been necessary, under his circumstances, to reign alone, by the aid of his standing army. But do not attempt to gloss over the veritable fact that he did reign without the support of Parliament, and in defiance of all constitutional authorities. It was not the nation which elevated him to supreme power, but his soldiers. At no time would any legitimate Parliament, or any popular voice, have made him an absolute ruler. He could not even have got a plebiscitum, as Louis Napoleon did. He was not liked by the nation at large, — not even by the more enlightened and conservative of the Puritans, such as the Presbyterians; and as for the Episcopalians, they looked upon him not only as a usurper but as a hypocrite.

It is difficult to justify such an act as usurpation and military tyranny by the standard of an immutable morality. If the overturning of all constitutional

authority by a man who professed to be a reformer, yet who reigned illegally as a despot, can be defended, it is only on the principle of expediency, that the end justifies the means, — the plea of the Jesuits, and of all the despots who have overturned constitutions and national liberties. But this is rank and undisguised Cæsarism. The question then arises, Was it necessary that a Cæsar should reign at Hampton Court? Some people think it was; and all admit that after the execution of the King there was no settled government, nothing but bitter, intolerant factions, each of which wished its own ascendency, and all were alike unscrupulous. Revolution ever creates factions and angry parties, more or less violent. It is claimed by many that a good government was impossible with these various and contending parties, and that nothing but anarchy would have existed had not Cromwell seized the reins, and sustained himself by a standing army, and ruled despotically. Again, others think that he was urged by a pressure which even he could not resist, — that of the army; that he was controlled by circumstances; that he could do no otherwise unless he resigned England to her fate, — to the anarchy of quarrelling and angry parties, who would not listen to reason, and who were too inexperienced to govern in such stormy times. The Episcopalians certainly, and the Presbyterians probably, would have restored

Charles II., — and this Cromwell regarded as a great possible calamity. If the King had been restored, all the fruit of the revolution would have been lost; there would have been a renewed reign of frivolities, insincerities, court scandals, venalities, favorites, and disguised Romanism, — yea, an alliance would have been formed with the old tyrants of Europe.

Cromwell was no fool, and he had a great insight into the principles on which the stability and prosperity of a nation rested. He doubtless felt that the nation required a strong arm at the helm, and that no one could save England in such a storm but himself. I believe he was sincere in this conviction, — a conviction based on profound knowledge of men and the circumstances of the age. I believe he was willing to be aspersed, even by his old friends, and heartily cursed by his enemies, if he could guide the ship of state into a safe harbor. I am inclined to believe that he was patriotic in his intentions; that he wished to save the country even, if necessary, by illegal means; that he believed there was a higher law *for him*, and that an enlightened posterity would vindicate his name and memory. He was not deceived as to his abilities, even if he were as to his call. He knew he was the strongest man in England, and that only the strongest could rule. He was willing to assume the responsibility, whatever violence he should do to his early princi-

ples, or to the opinions of those with whom he was at first associated. If there was anything that marked the character of Cromwell, it was the abiding sense, from first to last, of his personal responsibility to God Almighty, whose servant and instrument he felt himself to be. I believe he was loyal to his conscience, if not to his cause. He may have committed grave errors, for he was not infallible. It may have been an error that he ruled virtually without a Parliament, since it was better that a good measure should be defeated than that the cause of liberty should be trodden under foot. It was better that parliaments should wrangle and quarrel than that there should be no representation of the nation at all. And it was an undoubted error to transmit his absolute authority to his son, for this was establishing a new dynasty of kings. One of the worst things which Napoleon ever did was to seat his brothers on the old thrones of Europe. Doubtless, Cromwell wished to perpetuate the policy of his government, but he had no right to perpetuate a despotism in his own family: that was an insult to the nation and to the cause of constitutional liberty. Here he was selfish and ambitious, for, great as he was, he was not greater than the nation or his cause.

But I need not dwell on the blunders of Cromwell, if we call them by no harsher name. It would be harsh to judge him for his mistakes or sins under his peculiar

circumstances, his hand in the execution of Charles I., his jesuitical principles, his cruelties in Ireland, his dispersion of parliaments, and his usurpation of supreme power. Only let us call things by their right names; we gain nothing by glossing over defects. The historians of the Bible tell us how Abraham told lies to the King of Egypt, and David caused Uriah to be slain after he had appropriated his wife. Yet who were greater and better, upon the whole, than these favorites of Heaven?

Cromwell earned his great fame as one of the wisest statesmen and ablest rulers that England ever had. Like all monarchs, he is to be judged by the services he rendered to civilization. He was not a faultless man, but he proved himself a great benefactor. Whether we like him or not, we are compelled to admit that his administration was able and beneficent, and that he seemed to be actuated by a sincere desire to do all the good he could. If he was ambitious, his ambition was directed to the prosperity and glory of his country. If he levied taxes without the consent of the nation, he spent the money economically, wisely, and unselfishly. He sought no inglorious pomps; he built no expensive palaces; he gave no foolish fêtes; nor did he seek to disguise his tyranny by amusing or demoralizing the people, like the old Roman Cæsars. He would even have established a constitutional monarchy, had it been

practicable. The plots of royalists tempted him to appoint major-generals to responsible situations. To protect his life, he resorted to guards. He could not part with his power, but he used it for the benefit of the nation. If he did not reign by or through the people, he reigned *for* the people. He established religious liberty, and tolerated all sects but Catholics and Quakers. The Presbyterians were his enemies, but he never persecuted them. He had a great regard for law, and appointed the ablest and best men to high judicial positions. Sir Matthew Hale, whom he made chief-justice, was the greatest lawyer in England, an ornament to any country. Cromwell made strenuous efforts to correct the abuses of the court of chancery and of criminal law. He established trial by jury for political offences. He tried to procure the formal re-admission of the Jews to England. He held conferences with George Fox. He snatched Biddle, the Socinian, from the fangs of persecutors. He fostered commerce and developed the industrial resources of the nation, like Burleigh and Colbert. He created a navy, and became the father of the maritime greatness of England. He suppressed all license among the soldiers, although his power rested on their loyalty to him. He honored learning and exalted the universities, placing in them learned men. He secured the union between England and Scotland, and called representatives from Scotland

to his parliaments. He adopted a generous policy with the colonies in North America, and freed them from rapacious governors. His war policy was not for mere aggrandizement. He succeeded Gustavus Adolphus as the protector of Protestantism on the Continent. He sought to make England respected among all the nations; and, as righteousness exalts a nation, he sought to maintain public morality. His court was simple and decorous; he gave no countenance to levities and follies, and his own private life was pure and religious, — so that there was general admiration of his conduct as well as of his government.

Cromwell was certainly very fortunate in his régime. The army and navy did wonders; Blake and Monk gained great victories; Gibraltar was taken, — one of the richest prizes that England ever gained in war. The fleets of Spain were destroyed; the trade of the Indies was opened to his ships. He maintained the "balance of power." He punished the African pirates of the Mediterranean. His glory reached Asia, and extended to America. So great was his renown that the descendants of Abraham, even on the distant plains of Asia, inquired of one another if he were not the servant of the King of Kings, whom they were looking for. A learned Rabbi even came from Asia to London for the purpose of investigating his pedigree, thinking to discover in him the "Lion of the

tribe of Judah." If his policy had been followed out by his successors, Louis XIV. would not have dared to revoke the Edict of Nantes; if he had reigned ten years longer, there would have been no revival of Romanism. I suppose England never had so enlightened a monarch. He was more like Charlemagne than Richelieu. Contrast him with Louis XIV., a contemporaneous despot: Cromwell devoted all his energies to develop the resources of his country, while Louis did what he could to waste them; Cromwell's reign was favorable to the development of individual genius, but Louis was such an intolerable egotist that at the close of his reign all the great lights had disappeared; Cromwell was tolerant, Louis was persecuting; Cromwell laid the foundation of an indefinite expansion, Louis sowed the seeds of discontent and revolution. Both indeed took the sword, — the one to dethrone the Stuarts, the other to exterminate the Protestants. Cromwell bequeathed to successors the moral force of personal virtue, Louis paved the way for the most disgraceful excesses; Cromwell spent his leisure hours with his family and with divines, Louis with his favorites and mistresses; Cromwell would listen to expostulations, Louis crushed all who differed from him. The career of the former was a progressive rise, that of the latter a progressive fall. The ultimate influence of Cromwell's policy was to develop the great-

ness of England; that of Louis, to cut the sinews of national wealth, and poison those sources of renovation which still remained. The memory of Cromwell is dear to good men in spite of his defects; while that of Louis, in spite of his graces and urbanities, is a watchword for all that is repulsive in despotism. Hence Cromwell is more and more a favorite with enlightened minds, while Louis is more and more regarded as a man who made the welfare of the State subordinate to his own glory. In a word, Cromwell feared only God; while Louis feared only hell. The piety of the one was lofty; that of the other was technical, formal, and pharisaical. The chief defect in the character of Cromwell was his expediency, or what I call *jesuitism*, — following out good ends by questionable means; the chief defect in the character of Louis was an absorbing egotism, which sacrificed everything for private pleasure or interest.

The difficulty in judging Cromwell seems to me to be in the imperfection of our standards of public morality. We are apt to excuse in a ruler what we condemn in a private man. If Oliver Cromwell is to be measured by the standard which accepts expediency as a guide in life, he will be excused for his worst acts. If he is to be measured by an immutable standard, he will be picked to pieces. In regard to his private life, aside from cant and dissimulation, there is not much to

condemn, and there is much to praise. He was not a libertine like Henry IV., nor an egotist like Napoleon. He delighted in the society of the learned and the pious; he was susceptible to grand sentiments; he was just in his dealings and fervent in his devotions. He was liberal, humane, simple, unostentatious, and economical. He was indeed ambitious, but his ambition was noble.

His intellectual defect was his idea of special divine illumination, which made him visionary and rhapsodical and conceited. He was a second-adventist, and believed that Christ would return, at no distant time, to establish the reign of the saints upon the earth. But his morals were as irreproachable as those of Marcus Aurelius. Like Michael Angelo, he despised frivolities, though it is said he relished rough jokes, like Abraham Lincoln. He was conscientious in the discharge of what he regarded as duties, and seemed to feel his responsibility to God as the sovereign of the universe. His family revered him as much as the nation respected him. He was not indeed lovable, like Saint Louis; but he can never lose the admiration of mankind, since the glory of his administration was not sullied by those private vices which destroy esteem and ultimately undermine both power and influence. He was one of those world-heroes of whom nations will be proud as they advance in the toleration of

human infirmities, — as they draw distinction between those who live for themselves and those who live for their country, — and the recognition of those principles on which all progress is based.

Cromwell died prematurely, if not for his fame, at least for his usefulness. His reign as Protector lasted only five years, yet what wonders he did in that brief period! He suppressed the anarchies of the revolution, he revived law, he restored learning, he developed the resources of his country; he made it respected at home and abroad, and shed an imperishable glory on his administration, — but "on the threshold of success he met the inexorable enemy."

It was a stormy night, August 30, 1658, when the wild winds were roaring and all nature was overclouded with darkness and gloom, that the last intelligible words of the dying hero were heard by his attendants: "O Lord! though I am a miserable sinner, I am still in covenant with Thee. Thou hast made me, though very unworthy, an instrument to do Thy people good; and go on, O Lord, to deliver them and make Thy name glorious throughout the world!" These dying words are the key alike to his character and his mission. He believed himself to be an instrument of the Almighty Sovereign in whom he believed, and whom, with all his faults and errors, he sought to serve, and in whom he trusted.

And it is in this light, chiefly, that the career of this remarkable man is to be viewed. An instrument of God he plainly was, to avenge the wrongs of an insulted, an indignant, and an honest nation, and to impress upon the world the necessity of wise and benignant rulers. He arose to vindicate the majesty of public virtue, to rebuke the egotism of selfish kings, to punish the traitors of important trusts. He arose to point out the true sources of national prosperity, to head off the troops of a renovated Romanism, to promote liberty of conscience in all matters of religious belief. He was raised up as a champion of Protestantism when kings were returning to Rome, and as an awful chastiser of those bigoted and quarrelsome Irish who have ever been hostile to law and order, and uncontrollable by any influence but that of fear. But, above all, he was raised up to try the experiment of liberty in the seventeenth century.

That experiment unfortunately failed. All sects and parties sought ascendency rather than the public good; angry and inexperienced, they refused to compromise. Sectarianism was the true hydra that baffled the energy of the courageous combatant. Parliaments were factious, meddlesome, and inexperienced, and sought to block the wheels of government rather than promote wholesome legislation. The people hankered for their old pleasures, and were impatient of restraint; their leaders

were demagogues or fanatics; they could not be coerced by mild measures or appeals to enlightened reason. Hence coercive measures were imperative; and these could be carried only by a large standing army, — ever the terror and menace of liberty; the greatest blot on constitutional governments, — a necessity, but an evil, since the military power should be subordinate to the civil, not the civil to the military. The iron hand by which Cromwell was obliged to rule, if he ruled at all, at last became odious to all classes, since they had many rights which were ignored. When they clamored for the blood of an anointed tyrant, they did not bargain for a renewed despotism more irksome and burdensome than the one they had suppressed. The public rejoicings, the universal enthusiasm, the brilliant spectacles and fêtes, the flattering receptions and speeches which hailed the restoration of Charles II., showed unmistakably that the régime of Cromwell, though needed for a time, was unpopular, and was not in accordance with the national aspirations. If they were to be ruled by a tyrant, they preferred to be ruled according to precedents and traditions and hallowed associations. The English people loved then, as they love now, as they ever have loved, royalty, — the reign of kings according to the principles of legitimacy. They have shown the disposition to fetter these kings, not to dispense with them.

So the experiment of Cromwell and his party failed. How mournful it must have seemed to the original patriots of the revolution, that hard, iron, military rule was all that England had gained by the struggles and the blood of her best people. Wherefore had treasures been lavished in a nine years' contest; wherefore the battles of Marston Moor and Worcester; wherefore the eloquence of Pym and Hampden? All wasted. The house which had been swept and garnished was re-entered by devils worse than before.

Thus did this experiment seem; teaching, at least, this useful and impressive lesson, — that despotism will succeed unwise and violent efforts for reform; that reforms are not to be carried on by bayonets, but by reason; that reformers must be patient, and must be contented with constitutional measures; that any violation of the immutable laws of justice will be visited with unlooked-for retribution.

But sad as this experiment seemed, can it be pronounced to be wholly a failure? No earnest human experiment is ever thrown away. The great ideas of Cromwell, and of those who originally took up arms with him, entered into new combinations. The spirit remained, if the form was changed. After a temporary reaction, the love of liberty returned. The second revolution of 1688 was the logical sequence of the first. It was only another act in the great drama of national

development. The spirit which overthrew Charles I. also overturned the throne of James II.; but the wisdom gained by experience sent him into exile, instead of executing him on the scaffold. Two experiments with those treacherous Stuarts were necessary before the conviction became fastened on the mind of the English people that constitutional liberty could not exist while they remained upon the throne; and the spirit which had burst out into a blazing flame two generations earlier, was now confined within constitutional limits. But it was not suppressed; it produced salutary reforms with every advancing generation. "It produced," says Macaulay, "the famous Declaration of Rights, which guaranteed the liberties of the English upon their present basis; which again led to the freedom of the press, the abolition of slavery, Catholic emancipation, and representative reform." Had the experiment not been tried by Cromwell and his party, it might have been tried by worse men, whose gospel of rights would be found in the "social contract" of a Rousseau, rather than in the "catechism" of the Westminster divines. It was fortunate that revolutionary passions should have raged in the bosoms of Christians rather than of infidels, — of men who believed in obedience to a personal God, rather than men who teach the holiness of untutored impulse, the infallibility of majorities, and the majesty of the unaided

intellect of man. And then who can estimate the value of Cromwell's experience on the patriots of our own Revolution? His example may even have taught the great Washington how dangerous and inconsistent it would be to accept an earthly crown, while denouncing the tyranny of kings, and how much more enduring is that fame which is cherished in a nation's heart than that which is blared by the trumpet of idolatrous soldiers indifferent to those rights which form the basis of social civilization.

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XL.

LOUIS XIV.

THE FRENCH MONARCHY.

A. D. 1638–1715.

XL.

LOUIS XIV.

THE FRENCH MONARCHY.

THE verdict of this age in reference to Louis XIV. is very different from that which his own age pronounced. Two hundred years ago his countrymen called him *Le Grand Monarque*, and his glory filled the world. Since Charlemagne, no monarch had been the object of such unbounded panegyric as he, until Napoleon appeared. He lived in an atmosphere of perpetual incense, and reigned in dazzling magnificence.

Although he is not now regarded in the same light as he was in the seventeenth century, and originated no great movement that civilization values, — in fact was anything but a permanent benefactor to his country or mankind, — yet Louis XIV. is still one of the Beacon Lights of history, for warning if not for guidance. His reign was an epoch; it was not only one of the longest in human annals, but also one of the most brilliant, imposing, and interesting. Whatever opinion may exist as to his inherent in-

tellectual greatness, no candid historian denies the power of his will, the force of his character, and the immense influence he exerted. He was illustrious, if he was not great; he was powerful, if he made fatal mistakes; he was feared and envied by all nations, even when he stood alone; and it took all Europe combined to strip him of the conquests which his generals made, and to preserve the "balance of power" which he had disturbed. With all Europe in arms against him, he, an old and broken-hearted man, contrived to preserve, by his fortitude and will, the territories he had inherited; and he died peacefully upon his bed, at the age of seventy-six, still the most absolute king that ever reigned in France. A man so strong, so fortunate until his latter years; so magnificent in his court, which he made the most brilliant of modern times; so lauded by the great geniuses who surrounded his throne, all of whom looked up to him as a central sun of power and glory,—is not to be flippantly judged, or ruthlessly hurled from that proud pinnacle on which he was seated, amid the acclamations of two generations. His successes dazzled the world; his misfortunes excited its pity, except among those who were sufferers by his needless wars or his cruel persecutions. His virtues and his defects both stand out in bold relief, and will make him a character to meditate upon as long as history shall be written.

The reign of Louis XIV. would be remarkable for the great men who shed lustre on his throne, if he had himself been contemptible. Voltaire doubted if any age ever saw such an illustrious group, and he compares it with the age of Pericles in Greece, with that of Augustus in Rome, and that of the Medici in Italy, — four great epochs in intellectual excellence, which have never been surpassed in brilliancy and variety of talent. No such generals had arisen since the palmy days of Roman grandeur as Condé, Turenne, Luxembourg, Vauban, Berwick, and Villars, if we except Gustavus Adolphus, and those generals with whom the marshals of Louis contended, such as William III., Marlborough, and Eugene. No monarch was ever served by abler ministers than Colbert and Louvois; the former developing the industries and resources of a great country, and the latter organizing its forces for all the exigencies of vast military campaigns. What galaxy of poets more brilliant than that which shed glory on the throne of this great king! — men like Corneille, Boileau, Fontanelle, La Fontaine, Racine, and Molière; no one of them a Dante or a Shakspeare, but all together shining as a constellation. What great jurists and lawyers were Le Tellier and D'Aguesseau and Molé! What great prelates and preachers were Bossuet, Fénelon, Bourdeloue, Massillon, Flechier, Saurin, — unrivalled for eloquence in any age! What original

and profound thinkers were Pascal, Descartes, Helvetius, Malebranche, Nicole, and Quesnel! Until the seventeenth century, what more respectable historians had arisen than Dupin, Tillemont, Mabillon, and Fleury; or critics and scholars than Bayle, Arnauld, De Sacy, and Calmet! La Rochefoucauld uttered maxims which were learned by heart by giddy courtiers. Great painters and sculptors, such as Le Brun, Poussin, Claude Lorrain, and Girardon, ornamented the palaces which Mansard erected; while Le Nôtre laid out the gardens of those palaces which are still a wonder.

It must be borne in mind that Louis XIV. had an intuitive perception of genius and talent, which he was proud to reward and anxious to appropriate. Although his own education had been neglected, he had a severe taste and a disgust of all vulgarity, so that his manners were decorous and dignified in the midst of demoralizing pleasures. Proud, both from adulation and native disposition, he yet was polite and affable. He never passed a woman without lifting his hat, and he uniformly rose when a lady entered into his presence. But, with all his politeness, he never unbent, even in the society of his most intimate friends, so jealous was he of his dignity and power. Unscrupulous in his public transactions, and immoral in his private relations with women, he had a great respect for the

ordinances of religion, and was punctilious in the outward observances of the Catholic Church. The age itself was religious; and so was he, in a technical and pharisaical piety and petty ritualistic duties. He was a bigot and a persecutor, which fact endeared him to the Jesuits, by whom, in matters of conscience, he was ruled, so that he became their tool even while he thought he controlled everything. He was as jealous of his power as he was of his dignity, and he learned to govern himself as well as his subjects. He would himself submit to the most rigid formalities in order to exact a rigorous discipline and secure unconditional obedience from others. No one ever dared openly to thwart his will or oppose his wishes, although he could be led through his passions and his vanity: he was imperious in his commands, and exacting in the services he demanded from all who surrounded his person. He had perfect health, a strong physique, great aptitude for business, and great regularity in his habits. It was difficult to deceive him, for he understood human nature, and thus was able to select men of merit and talent for all high offices in State and Church.

In one sense Louis XIV. seems to have been even patriotic, since he identified his own glory with that of the nation, having learned something from Richelieu, whose policy he followed. Hence he was supported by the people, if he was not loved, because he was

ambitious of making France the most powerful nation in Christendom. The love of glory ever has been one of the characteristics of the French nation, and this passion the king impersonated, which made him dear to the nation, as Napoleon was before he became intoxicated by power; and hence Louis had the power of rallying his subjects in great misfortunes. They forgave extravagance in palace-building, from admiration of magnificence. They were proud of a despot who called out the praises of the world. They saw in his parks, his gardens, his marble halls, his tapestries, his pictures, and his statues a glory which belonged to France as well as to him. They marched joyfully in his armies, whatever their sacrifices, for he was only leading them to glory,—an empty illusion, yet one of those words which has ruled the world, since it is an expression of that vanity which has its roots in the deepest recesses of the soul. Glory is the highest aspiration of egotism, and Louis was an incarnation of egotism, like Napoleon after him. They both represented the master passions of the people to whom they appealed. "Never," says St. Simon, "has any one governed with a better grace, or, by the manner of bestowing, more enhanced the value of his favors. Never has any one sold at so high a price his words, nay his very smiles and glances." And then, "so imposing and majestic was his air that those who addressed him must first accustom themselves to

his appearance, not to be overawed. No one ever knew better how to maintain a certain manner which made him appear great." Yet it is said that his stature was small. No one knew better than he how to impress upon his courtiers the idea that kings are of a different blood from other men. He even knew how to invest vice and immorality with an air of elegance, and was capable of generous sentiments and actions. He on one occasion sold a gold service of plate for four hundred thousand francs, to purchase bread for starving troops. If haughty, exacting, punctilious, he was not cold. Even his rigid etiquette and dignified reserve were the dictates of state-craft, as well as of natural inclination. He seemed to feel that he was playing a great part, with the eyes of the world upon him; so that he was an actor as Napoleon was, but a more consistent one, because in his egotism he never forgot himself, not even among his mistresses. As *grand monarque*, the arbiter of all fortunes, the central sun of all glory, was he always figuring before the eyes of men. He never relaxed his habits of ceremony and ostentation, nor his vigilance as an administrator, nor his iron will, nor his thirst for power; so that he ruled as he wished until he died, in spite of the reverses of his sad old age, and without losing the respect of his subjects, oppressed as they were with taxes and humiliated by national disasters.

Such were some of the traits which made Louis XIV. a great sovereign, if not a great man. He was not only supported by the people who were dazzled by his magnificence, and by the great men who adorned his court, but he was aided by fortunate circumstances and great national ideas. He was heir of the powers of Richelieu and the treasures of Mazarin. Those two cardinals, who claimed equal rank with independent princes, higher than that of the old nobility, pursued essentially the same policy, although this policy was the fruit of Richelieu's genius; and this policy was the concentration of all authority in the hands of the king. Louis XIII. was the feeblest of the Bourbons, but he made his throne the first in Europe. Richelieu was a great benefactor to the cause of law, order, and industry, despotic as was his policy and hateful his character. When he died, worn out by his herculean labors, the nobles tried to regain the privileges and powers they had lost, and a miserable warfare called the "Fronde" was the result, carried on without genius or system. But the Fronde produced some heroes who were destined to be famous in the great wars of Louis XIV. Mazarin, with less ability than Richelieu, and more selfish, conquered in the end, by following out the policy of his predecessor. He developed the resources of the kingdom, besides accumulating an enormous fortune for himself, — about two hundred millions

of francs, — which, when he died, he bequeathed, not to the Church or his relatives, but to the young King, who thus became personally rich as well as strong. To have entered upon the magnificent inheritance which these two able cardinals bequeathed to the monarchy was most fortunate to Louis, — unrestricted power and enormous wealth.

But Louis was still more fortunate in reaping the benefits of the principle of royalty. We have in the United States but a feeble conception of the power of this principle in Europe in the seventeenth century; it was nursed by all the chivalric sentiments of the Middle Ages. The person of a king was sacred; he was regarded as divinely commissioned. The sacred oil poured on his head by the highest dignitary of the Church, at his coronation, imparted to him a sacred charm. All the influences of the Church, as well as those of Feudalism, set the king apart from all other men, as a consecrated monarch to rule the people. This loyalty to the throne had the sanction of the Jewish nation, and of all Oriental nations from the remotest ages. Hence the world has known no other form of government than that of kings and emperors, except in a few countries and for a brief period. Whatever the king decreed, had the force of irresistible law; no one dared to disobey a royal mandate but a rebel in actual hostilities. Resistance to royal authority was ruin. This royal power

was based on and enforced by the ideas of ages. Who can resist universally accepted ideas?

Moreover, in France especially, there was a chivalric charm about the person of a king; he was not only sacred, of purer blood than other people, but the greatest nobles were proud to attend and wait upon his person. Devotion to the person of the prince became the highest duty. It was not political slavery, but a religious and sentimental allegiance. So sacred was this allegiance, that only the most detested tyrants were in personal danger of assassination, or those who were objects of religious fanaticism. A king could dismiss his most powerful minister, or his most triumphant general at the head of an army, by a stroke of the pen, or by a word, without expostulation or resistance. To disobey the king was tantamount to defiance of Almighty power. A great general rules by machinery rather than devotion to his person. But devotion to the king needed no support from armies or guards. A king in the seventeenth century was supposed to be the vicegerent of the Deity.

Another still more powerful influence gave stability to the throne of Louis: this was the Catholic Church. Louis was a devout Catholic in spite of his sins, and was true to the interests of the Pope. He was governed, so far as he was governed at all, by Jesuit confessors. He associated on the most intimate terms

with the great prelates and churchmen of the day, like Bossuet, Fénelon, La Chaise, and Le Tellier. He was regular at church and admired good sermons; he was punctilious in all the outward observances of his religion. He detested all rebellion from the spiritual authority of the popes; he hated both heresy and schism. In his devotion to the Catholic Church he was as narrow and intolerant as a village priest. His sincerity in defence of the Church was never questioned, and hence all the influences of the Church were exerted to uphold his domination. He may have quarrelled with popes on political grounds, and humiliated them as temporal powers, but he stood by them in the exercise of their spiritual functions. In Louis' reign the State and Church were firmly knit together. It was deemed necessary to be a good Catholic in order to be even a citizen,—so that religion became fashionable, provided it was after the pattern of that of the King and court. Even worldly courtiers entered with interest into the most subtile of theological controversies. But the King always took the side devoted to the Pope, and he hated Jansenism almost as much as he hated Protestantism. Hence the Catholic Church ever rallied to his support.

So, with all these powerful supports Louis began his long reign of seventy-six years,—which technically began when he was four years old, on the death of

his father Louis XIII., in 1643, when the kingdom was governed by his mother, Anne of Austria, as regent, and by Cardinal Mazarin as prime minister. During the minority of the King the humiliation of the nobles continued. Protestantism was only tolerated, and the country distracted rather than impoverished by the civil war of the Fronde, with its intrigues and ever-shifting parties, — a giddy maze, which nobody now cares to unravel; a sort of dance of death, in which figured cardinals, princes, nobles, bishops, judges, and generals, — when "Bacchus, Momus, and Moloch" alternately usurped dominion. Those eighteen years of strife, folly, absurdity, and changing fortunes, when Mazarin was twice compelled to quit the kingdom he governed; when the queen-regent was forced also twice to fly from her capital; when Cardinal De Retz disgraced his exalted post as Archbishop of Paris by the vilest intrigues; when Condé and Conti obscured the lustre of their military laurels; when alternately the parliaments made war on the crown, and the seditious nobles ignobly yielded their functions merely to register royal decrees, — these contests, rivalries, cabals, and follies, ending however in the more solid foundations of absolute royal authority, are not to be here discussed, especially as nobody can thread that political labyrinth; and we begin, therefore, not with the technical reign of the great King, but with his actual

government, which took place on the death of Mazarin, when he was twenty-two.

It is said that when that able ruler passed away so reluctantly from his pictures and his government, the ministers asked of the young King, — thus far only known for his pleasures, — to whom they should now bring their portfolios, "To me," he replied; and from that moment he became the State, and his will the law of the land.

I have already alluded to the talents and capacities of Louis for governing, and the great aid he derived from the labors of Richelieu and the moral sentiments of his age respecting royalty and religion; so I will not dwell on personal defects or virtues, but proceed to show the way in which he executed the task devolved upon him, — in other words, present a brief history of his government, for which he was so well fitted by native talents, fortunate circumstances, and established ideas. I will only say, that never did a monarch enter upon his career with such ample and magnificent opportunities for being a benefactor of his people and of civilization. In his hands were placed all the powers of good and evil; and so far as government can make a nation great, Louis had the means and opportunities beyond those of any monarch in modern times. He had armies and generals and accumulated treasures; and all implicitly served him. His

ministers and his generals were equally able and supple, and he was at peace with all the world. Parliaments, nobles, and Huguenots were alike submissive and reverential. He had inherited the experience of Sully, of Richelieu, and of Mazarin. His kingdom was protected by great natural boundaries, — the North Sea, the ocean, the Mediterranean, the Pyrenees, the Alps, and the mountains which overlook the Rhine. By nothing was he fettered but by the decrees of everlasting righteousness. To his praise be it said, he inaugurated his government by selecting Colbert as one of his prime ministers, — the ablest man of his kingdom. It was this honest and astute servant of royalty who ferreted out the peculations of Fouquet, whom Louis did not hesitate to disgrace and punish. The great powers of Fouquet were gradually bestowed on the merchant's son of Rheims.

Colbert was a plebeian and a Protestant, — cold, severe, reserved, awkward, abrupt, and ostentatiously humble, but of inflexible integrity and unrivalled sagacity and forethought; more able as a financier and political economist than any man of his century. It was something for a young, proud, and pleasure-seeking monarch to see and reward the talents of such a man; and Colbert had the tact and wisdom to make his young master believe that all the measures which he pursued originated in the royal brain. His great merit

as a minister consisted in developing the industrial resources of France and providing the King with money.

Colbert was the father of French commerce, and the creator of the French navy. He saw that Flanders was enriched by industry, and England and Holland made powerful by a navy, while Spain and Portugal languished and declined with all their mines of gold and silver. So he built ships of war, and made harbors for them, gave charters to East and West India Companies, planted colonies in India and America, decreed tariffs to protect infant manufactures, gave bounties to all kinds of artisans, encouraged manufacturing industry, and declared war on the whole brood of aristocratic peculators that absorbed the revenues of the kingdom. He established a better system of accounts, compelled all officers to reside at their posts, and reduced the percentage of the collection of the public money. In thirteen years he increased the navy from thirty ships to two hundred and seventy-three, one hundred of which were ships of the line. He prepared a new code of maritime law for the government of the navy, which called out universal admiration. He dug the canal of Languedoc, which united the Mediterranean with the Atlantic Ocean. He instituted the Academies of Sciences, of Inscriptions, of Belles Lettres, of Painting, of Sculpture, of Architecture; and founded

the School of Oriental languages, the Observatory, and the School of Law. He gave pensions to Corneille, Racine, Molière, and other men of genius. He rewarded artists and invited scholars to France; he repaired roads, built bridges, and directed the attention of the middle classes to the accumulation of capital. "He recognized the connection of works of industry with the development of genius. He saw the influence of science in the production of riches; of taste on industry; and the fine arts on manual labor." For all these enlightened measures the King had the credit and the glory; and it certainly redounds to his sagacity that he accepted such wise suggestions, although he mistook them for his own. So to the eyes of Europe Louis at once loomed up as an enlightened monarch; and it would be difficult to rob him of this glory. He indorsed the economical reforms of his great minister, and rewarded merit in all departments, which he was not slow to see. The world extolled this enlightened and fortunate young prince, and saw in him a second Solomon, both for wisdom and magnificence.

Another great genius ably assisted Louis as soon as he turned his attention to war, — the usual employment of ambitious kings, — and this was Le Tellier, Marquis of Louvois, the great war minister, who laid out the campaigns and directed the movements of such generals as Condé, Turenne, and Luxembourg. And here again

it redounds to the sagacity of Louis that he should select a man for so great a post whom he never personally loved, and who in his gusts of passion would almost insult his master. Louvois is acknowledged to have been the ablest war minister that France ever had.

Louis reigned peaceably and prosperously for six years before the ambition of being a conqueror and a hero seized him. At twenty-eight he burned to play the part of Alexander. Thenceforth the history of his reign chiefly pertains to his gigantic wars, — some defensive, but mostly offensive, aggressive, and unprovoked.

In regard to these various wars, which plunged Europe in mourning and rage for nearly fifty years, Louis is generally censured by historians. They were wars of ambition, like those of Alexander and Frederic II., until Europe combined against him and compelled him to act on the defensive. The limits of this lecture necessarily prevent me from describing these wars; I can only allude to the most important of them, and then only to show results.

His first great war was simply outrageous, and was an insult to all Europe, and a violation of all international law. In 1667, with an immense army, he undertook the conquest of Flanders, with no better excuse than Frederic II. had for the invasion of Silesia, —

because he wanted an increase of territory. Flanders had done nothing to warrant this outrage, was unprepared for war, and was a weak state, but rich and populous, with fine harbors, and flourishing manufactures. With nearly fifty thousand men, under Condé, Turenne, and Luxembourg, and other generals of note, aided by Louvois, who provided military stores of every kind, and all under the eye of the King himself, full of ideas of glory, the issue of the conflict was not doubtful. In fact, there was no serious defence. It was hopeless from the first. Louis had only to take possession of cities and fortresses which were at his mercy. The frontier towns were mostly without fortifications, so that it took only about two or three days to conquer any city. The campaign was more a court progress than a series of battles. It was a sort of holiday sport for courtiers, like a royal hunt. The conquest of all Flanders might have been the work of a single campaign, for no city offered a stubborn resistance; but the war was prolonged for another year, that Louis might more easily take possession of Franche-Comté, — a poor province, but fertile in soil, well peopled, one hundred and twenty miles in length and sixty in breadth. In less than three weeks this province was added to France. "Louis," said the Spanish council in derision, "might have sent his *valet de chambre* to have taken possession of the country in

his name, and saved himself the trouble of going in person."

This successful raid seems to have contented the King for the time, since Holland made signs of resistance, and a league was forming against him, embracing England, Holland, and Sweden.

The courtiers and flatterers of Louis XIV. called this unheroic seizure "glory." And it doubtless added to the dominion of France, inflamed the people with military ambition, and caused the pride of birth for the first time to yield to military talent and military rank. A marshal became a greater personage than a duke, although a marshal was generally taken from the higher nobility.

Louis paid no apparent penalty for this crime, any more than prosperous wickedness at first usually receives. "His eyes stood out with fatness." To idolatrous courtiers "he had more than heart could wish." But the penalty was to come: law cannot be violated with impunity.

The peace of Aix la Chapelle in 1668 followed, which made Louis the most prominent figure in Europe. He was then twenty-nine years of age, in the pride of strength, devoted equally to pleasure and ambition. It was then that he was the lover of the Duchesse de La Vallière, who was soon to be supplanted by the imperious Montespan. Louis remained at peace for

four years, but all the while he was preparing for another war, aimed against Holland, which had offended him because resolved to resist him.

Vaster preparations were made for this war than that against Flanders, five years before. The storm broke out in 1672, when this little state saw itself invaded by one hundred and thirty thousand men, led by the King in person, accompanied by his principal marshals, his war-minister Louvois, and Vauban, to whom was intrusted the direction of siege operations, — an engineer who changed the system of fortifications. This was the most magnificent army that Europe had ever seen since the Crusades, and much was expected of it. Against Condé, Turenne, Luxembourg, and Vauban, all under the eye of the King, with a powerful train of artillery, and immense sums of money to bribe the commanders of garrisons, Holland had only to oppose twenty-five thousand soldiers, under a sickly young man of twenty-two, William, Prince of Orange.

Of course Holland was unable to resist such an overwhelming tide of enemies, such vast and disproportionate forces. City after city and fortress after fortress was compelled to surrender to the generals of the French King. "They were taken almost as soon as they were invested." All the strongholds on the Rhine and Issel fell. The Prince of Orange could not even take the field. Louis crossed the Rhine without difficulty, when

the waters were low, with only four or five hundred horsemen to dispute his passage. This famous passage was the subject of ridiculous panegyrics by both painters and poets. It was generally regarded as a prodigious feat, especially by the people of Paris, as if it were another passage of the Granicus

Then rapidly fell Arnheim, Nimeguen, Utrecht, and other cities. The wealthy families of Amsterdam prepared to embark in their ships for the East Indies. Nothing remained to complete the conquest of Holland but the surrender of Amsterdam, which still held out. Holland was in despair, and sent ambassadors to the camp of Louis, headed by Grotius, to implore his mercy. He received them, after protracted delays, with blended insolence and arrogance, and demanded, as the conditions of his mercy, that the States should give up all their fortified cities, pay twenty millions of francs, and establish the Catholic religion,— conditions which would have reduced the Hollanders to absolute slavery, morally and politically. From an inspiration of blended patriotism and despair, the Dutch opened their dykes, overflowed the whole country in possession of the enemy, and thus made Amsterdam impregnable,— especially as they were still masters of the sea, and had just dispersed, in a brilliant naval battle under De Ruyter, the combined fleets of France and England.

It was this memorable resistance to vastly superior forces, and readiness to make any sacrifices, which gave immortal fame to William of Nassau, and imperishable glory also to the little state over which he ruled. What a spectacle!—a feeble mercantile state, without powerful allies, bracing itself up to a life-and-death struggle with the mightiest potentate of Europe. I know no parallel to it in the history of modern times. Our fathers in the Revolutionary war could retreat to forests and mountains; but Holland had neither mountains nor forests. There was no escape from political ruin but by the inundation of fertile fields, the destruction to an unprecedented degree of private property, and the decimation of the male part of the population. Nor did the noble defenders dream of victory; they only hoped to make a temporary stand. William knew he would be beaten in every battle; his courage was moral rather than physical. He lost no ground by defeat, while Louis lost ground by victory, since it required a large part of his army to guard the prisoners and garrison the fortresses he had taken.

Some military writers say that Louis should have persevered until he had taken Amsterdam. As well might Napoleon have remained in Russia after the conflagration of Moscow. In May, Louis entered Holland; in July, all Europe was in confederacy against him, through the negotiations of the Prince of Orange.

Louis hastened to quit the army when no more conquests could be made in a country overflowed with water, leaving Turenne and Luxembourg to finish the war in Franche-Comté. The able generals of the French king were obliged to evacuate Holland. That little state, by an act of supreme self-sacrifice, saved itself when all seemed lost. I do not read of any military mistakes on the part of the generals of Louis. They were baffled by an unforeseen inundation; and when they were compelled to evacuate the flooded country, the Dutch quietly closed their dykes and pumped the water out again into their canals by their windmills, and again restored fertility to their fields; and by the time Louis was prepared for fresh invasions, a combination existed against him so formidable that he found it politic to make peace. The campaigns of Turenne on the Rhine were indeed successful; but he was killed in an insignificant battle, from a chance cannon-ball, while the Prince of Condé retired forever from military service after the bloody battle of Senif. On the whole, the French were victorious in the terrible battles which followed the evacuation of Holland, and Louis dictated peace to Europe apparently in the midst of victories at Nimeguen, in 1678, after six years of brilliant fighting on both sides.

At the peace of Nimeguen Louis was in the zenith of his glory, as Napoleon was after the peace of Tilsit.

He was justly regarded as the mightiest monarch of his age, the greatest king that France had ever seen. All Europe stood in awe of him; and with awe was blended admiration, for his resources were unimpaired, his generals had greatly distinguished themselves, and he had added important provinces to his kingdom, which was also enriched by the internal reforms of Colbert, and made additionally powerful by commerce and a great navy, which had gained brilliant victories over the Dutch and Spanish fleets. Duquesne showed himself to be almost as great a genius in naval warfare as De Ruyter, who was killed off Aosta in 1676. In those happy and prosperous days the Hotel de Ville conferred upon Louis the title of "Great," which posterity never acknowledged. "Titles," says Voltaire, "are never regarded by posterity. The simple name of a man who has performed noble actions impresses on us more respect than all the epithets that can be invented."

After the peace of Nimeguen, in 1678, the King reigned in greater splendor than before. There were no limits to his arrogance and his extravagance. He was a modern Nebuchadnezzar. He claimed to be the state. *L'état, c'est moi!* was his proud exclamation. He would bear no contradiction and no opposition. The absorbing sentiment of his soul seems to have been that France belonged to him, that it had been given to

him as an inheritance, to manage as he pleased for his private gratification. "Self-aggrandizement," he wrote, "is the noblest occupation of kings." Most writers affirm that personal aggrandizement became the law of his life, and that he now began to lose sight of the higher interests and happiness of his people, and to reign not for them but for himself. He became a man of resentments, of caprices, of undisguised selfishness; he became pompous and haughty and self-willed. We palliate his self-exaggeration and pride, on account of the disgraceful flatteries he received on every hand. Never was a man more extravagantly lauded, even by the learned. But had he been half as great as his courtiers made him think, he would not have been so intoxicated; Cæsar or Charlemagne would not thus have lost their intellectual balance. The strongest argument to prove that he was not inherently great, but made apparently so by fortunate circumstances, is his self-deception.

In his arrogance and presumption, like Napoleon after the peace of Tilsit, he now sets aside the rights of other nations, heaps galling insults on independent potentates, and assumes the most arrogant tone in all his relations with his neighbors or subjects. He makes conquests in the midst of peace. He cites the princes of Europe before his councils. He deprives the Elector Palatine and the Elector of Treves of some of their

most valuable seigniories. He begins to persecute the Protestants. He seizes Luxembourg and the principality which belonged to it. He humbles the republic of Genoa, and compels the Doge to come to Versailles to implore his clemency. He treats with haughty insolence the Pope himself, and sends an ambassador to his court on purpose to insult him. He even insists on giving an Elector to Cologne.

And the same inflated pride and vanity which led Louis to trample on the rights of other nations, led him into unbounded extravagance in palace-building. Versailles arose, — at a cost, some affirm, of a thousand millions of livres, — unrivalled for magnificence since the fall of the Cæsars. In this vast palace did he live, more after the fashion of an Oriental than an Occidental monarch, having enriched and furnished it with the wonders of the world, surrounded with princes, marshals, nobles, judges, bishops, ambassadors, poets, artists, philosophers, and scholars, all of whom rendered to him perpetual incense. Never was such a grand court seen before on this earth: it was one of the great features of the seventeenth century. There was nothing censurable in collecting all the most distinguished and illustrious people of France around him: they must have formed a superb society, from which the proud monarch could learn much to his enlightenment. But he made them all obsequious courtiers,

exacted from all an idolatrous homage, and subjected them to wearisome ceremonials. He took away their intellectual independence; he banished Racine because the poet presumed to write a political tract. He made it difficult to get access to his person; he degraded the highest nobles by menial offices, and insulted the nation by the exaltation of abandoned women, who squandered the revenues of the state in their pleasures and follies, so that this grand court, alike gay and servile, intellectual and demoralized, became the scene of perpetual revels, scandals, and intrigues.

It was at this period that Louis abandoned himself to those adulterous pleasures which have ever disgraced the Bourbons. Yet scarcely a single woman by whom he was for a while enslaved retained her influence, but a succession of mistresses arose, blazed, triumphed, and fell. Mancini, the niece of Mazarin, was forsaken without the decency of the slightest word of consolation. La Vallière, the only woman who probably ever loved him with sincerity and devotion, had but a brief reign, and was doomed to lead a dreary life of thirty-six years in penitence and neglect in a Carmelite convent. Madame de Montespan retained her ascendency longer for she had talents as well as physical beauty; she was the most prodigal and imperious of all the women that ever triumphed over the weakness of man. She reigned when Louis was in all the pride of man-

hood and at the summit of his greatness and fame, — accompanying him in his military expeditions, presiding at his fêtes, receiving the incense of nobles, the channel of court favor, the dispenser of honors but not of offices; for amid all the slaveries to which women subjected the proudest man on earth by the force of physical charms, he never gave to them his sceptre. It was not till Madame de Maintenon supplanted this beautiful and brilliant woman in the affections of the King, and until he was a victim of superstitious fears, and had met with great reverses, that state secrets were intrusted to a female friend, — for Madame de Maintenon was never a mistress in the sense that Montespan was.

During this brilliant period of ten years from the peace of Nimeguen, in 1678, to the great uprising of the nations to humble him, in 1688, Versailles and other palaces were completed, works of art adorned the capital, and immortal works of genius made his reign illustrious.

While Colbert lived, I do not read of any extraordinary blunder on the part of the Government. Perhaps palace-building may be considered a mistake, since it diverted the revenues of the kingdom into monuments of royal vanity. But the sums lavished on architects, gardeners, painters, sculptors, and those who worked under them, employed thousands of useful arti-

sans, created taste, and helped to civilize the people. The people profited by the extravagance of the King and his courtiers; the money was spent in France, which was certainly better than if it had been expended in foreign wars; it made Paris and Versailles the most attractive cities of the world; it stimulated all the arts, and did not demoralize the nation. Would this country be poorer, and the government less stable, if five hundred millions were expended at Washington to make it the most beautiful city of the land, and create an honest pride even among the representatives of the West, perhaps diverting them from building another capital on the banks of the Mississippi? Would this country be richer if great capitalists locked up their money in State securities, instead of spending their superfluous wealth in reclaiming sterile tracts and converting them into gardens and parks? The very magnificence of Louis impressed such a people as the French with the idea of his power, and tended to make the government secure, until subsequent wars imposed such excessive taxation as to impoverish the people and drain the sources of national wealth. We do not read that Colbert made serious remonstrances to the palace-building of the King, although afterwards Louis regarded it as one of the errors of his reign.

But when Colbert died, in 1685, another spirit seemed to animate the councils of the King, and great mistakes

were made,—which is the more noteworthy, since the moral character of the King seemed to improve. It was at this time that he fell under the influence of Madame de Maintenon and the Jesuits. They made his court more decorous. Montespan was sent away. Bossuet and La Chaise gained great ascendency over the royal conscience. Louis began to realize his responsibilities; the love of glory waned; the welfare of the people was now considered. Whether he was *ennuied* with pleasure, or saw things in a different light, or felt the influence of the narrow-minded but accomplished and virtuous woman whom he made his wife, or was disturbed by the storm which was gathering in the political horizon, he became more thoughtful and grave, though not less tyrannical.

Yet it was then that he made the most fatal mistake of his life, the evil consequences of which pursued him to his death. He revoked the Edict of Nantes, which Henry IV. had granted, and which had secured religious toleration. This he did from a perverted conscience, wishing to secure the unanimity and triumph of the Catholic faith; to this he was incited by the best woman with whom he was ever brought in intimate relations; in this he was encouraged by all the religious bigots of his kingdom. He committed a monstrous crime that good might come,—not foreseeing the ultimate consequences, and showing anything but an

enlarged statesmanship. This stupid folly alienated his best subjects, and sowed the seeds of revolution in the next reign, and tended to undermine the throne. Richelieu never would have consented to such an insane measure; for this cruel act not only destroyed veneration at home, but created detestation among all enlightened foreigners.

It is a hackneyed saying, that "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church." But it would seem that the persecution of the Protestants was an exception to this truth, — and a persecution all the more needless and revolting since the Protestants were not in rebellion against the government, as in the time of Charles IX. This diabolical persecution, justified however by some of the greatest men in France, had its intended results. The bigots who incited that crime had studied well the principles of successful warfare. As early as 1666 the King was urged to suppress the Protestant religion, and long before the Edict of Nantes was revoked the Protestants had been subjected to humiliation and annoyance. If they held places at court, they were required to sell them; if they were advocates, they were forbidden to plead; if they were physicians, they were prevented from visiting patients. They were gradually excluded from appointments in the army and navy; little remained to them except commerce and manufactures. Protestants could not hold Catholics

as servants; soldiers were unjustly quartered upon them; their taxes were multiplied, their petitions were unread. But in 1685 dragonnades subjected them to still greater cruelties; who tore up their linen for camp beds, and emptied their mattresses for litters. The poor, unoffending Protestants filled the prisons, and dyed the scaffolds with their blood. They were prohibited under the severest penalties from the exercise of their religion; their ministers were exiled, their children were baptized in the Catholic faith, their property was confiscated, and all attempts to flee the country were punished by the galleys. Two millions of people were disfranchised; two hundred thousand perished by the executioners, or in prisons, or in the galleys. All who could fly escaped to other countries; and those who escaped were among the most useful citizens, carrying their arts with them to enrich countries at war with France. Some two hundred thousand contrived to fly, — thus weakening the kingdom, and filling Europe with their execrations. Never did a crime have so little justification, and never was a crime followed with severer retribution. Yet Le Tellier, the chancellor, at the age of eighty, thanked God that he was permitted the exalted privilege of affixing the seal of his office to the act before he died. Madame de Maintenon declared that it would cover Louis with glory. Madame de Sévigné said that no royal ordinance had ever been more mag-

nificent. Hardly a protest came from any person of influence in the land, not even from Fénelon. The great Bossuet, at the funeral of Le Tellier, thus broke out: "Let us publish this miracle of our day, and pour out our hearts in praise of the piety of Louis,— this new Constantine, this new Theodosius, this new Charlemagne, through whose hands heresy is no more." The Pope, though at this time hostile to Louis, celebrated a Te Deum.

Among those who fled the kingdom to other lands were nine thousand sailors and twelve thousand soldiers, headed by Marshal Schomberg and Admiral Duquesne,— the best general and the best naval officer that France then had. Other distinguished people transferred their services to foreign courts. The learned Claude, who fled to Holland, gave to the world an eloquent picture of the persecution. Jurieu, by his burning pamphlets, excited the insurrection of Cévennes. Basnage and Rapin, the historians, Saurin the great preacher, Papin the eminent scientist, and other eminent men, all exiles, weakened the supports of Louis. France was impoverished in every way by this "great miracle" of the reign; "so that," says Martin, "the new temple that Louis had pretended to erect to unity fell to ruin as it rose from the ground, and left only an open chasm in place of its foundations. . . . The nothingness of absolute government by one

alone was revealed under the very reign of the great King."

The rebound of the revocation overthrew all the barriers within which Louis had intrenched himself. All the smothered fires of hatred and of vengeance were kindled anew in Holland and in every Protestant country. William of Nassau headed the confederation of hostile states that dreaded the ascendency and detested the policy of Louis XIV. All Europe was resolved on the humiliation of a man it both feared and hated. The great war which began in 1688, when William of Nassau became King of England on the flight of James II., was not sought by Louis. This war cannot be laid to his military ambition; he provoked it indeed, indirectly, by his arrogance and religious persecutions, but on his part it was as truly defensive as were the wars of Napoleon after the invasion of Russia. Whatever is truly heroic in the character of Louis was seen after he was forty-eight. Whatever claims to greatness he may have had are only to be sustained by the memorable resistance he made to united Europe in arms against him, when his great ministers and his best generals had died. Turenne died in 1675, Colbert in 1683, Condé in 1686, Le Tellier in 1687, and Louvois in 1691. Then it was that his great reverses began, and his glory paled before the sun of the King of England. These reverses may

have been the result of incapacity, and they may have been the result of the combined forces which outnumbered or overmatched his own; certain it is that in the terrible contest to which he was now doomed, he showed great force of character and great fortitude, which command our respect.

I cannot enter on that long war which began with the League of Augsburg in 1688, and continued to the peace of Ryswick in 1697, — nine years of desperate fighting, when successes and defeats were nearly balanced, and when the resources of all the contending parties were nearly exhausted. France, at the close of the war, was despoiled of all her conquests and all the additions to her territory made since the Peace of Nimeguen, except Strasburg and Alsace. For the first time since the accession of Richelieu to power, France lost ground.

The interval between this war and that of the Spanish succession — an interval of three years — was only marked by the ascendency of Madame de Maintenon, and a renewed persecution, directed not against Protestants, but against those Catholics who cultivated the highest and freest religious life, and in which Bossuet appears to a great disadvantage by the side of his rival, the equally illustrious Fénelon. It was also marked by the gradual disappearance of the great lights in literature. La Fontaine died in 1695, Racine in 1699.

Boileau was as good as dead; Mesdames de la Sablière and de la Fayette, Pellisson and Bussy-Rabutin, La Bruyère and Madame Sévigné, all died about this time. The only great men at the close of the century in France who made their genius felt were Bossuet, who encouraged the narrow intolerance which aimed to suppress the Jansenists and Quietists, and Fénelon, who protected them although he did not join them, — the "Eagle of Meaux" and the "Swan of Cambray," as they were called, offering in the realm of art "the eternal duality of strength and grace," like Michael Angelo and Raphael; the one inspiring the fear and the other the love of God, yet both seeing in the Christian religion the highest hopes of the world. The internal history of this period centres around those pious mystics of whom Madame Guyon was the representative, and those inquiring intellectual Jansenists who had defied the Jesuits, but were finally crushed by an intolerant government. The lamentable dispute between Bossuet and Fénelon also then occurred, which led to the disgrace of the latter, — as banishment to his diocese was regarded. But in his exile his moral influence was increased rather than diminished; while the publication of his "Telemaque," made without his consent from a copy that had been abstracted from him, won him France and Europe, though it rendered Louis XIV. forever irreconcilable. Bossuet did not

long survive the banishment of his rival, and died in 1704, a month before Bourdaloue, and two years before Bayle. France intellectually, under the despotic intolerance of the King, was going through an eclipse or hastening to a dissolution, while the material state of the country showed signs of approaching bankruptcy. The people were exhausted by war and taxes, and all the internal improvements which Colbert had stimulated were neglected. "The fisheries of Normandy were ruined, and the pasture lands of Alsace were taken from the peasantry. Picardy lost a twelfth part of its population; many large cities were almost abandoned. In Normandy, out of seven hundred thousand people, there were but fifty thousand who did not sleep on straw. The linen manufactures of Brittany were destroyed by the heavy duties; Touraine lost one fourth of her population; the silk trade of Tours was ruined; the population of Troyes fell from sixty thousand to twenty thousand; Lyons lost twenty thousand souls since the beginning of the war."

In spite of these calamities the blinded King prepared for another exhausting war, in order to put his grandson on the throne of Spain. This last and most ruinous of all his wars might have been averted if he only could have cast away his ambition and his pride. Humbled and crippled, he yet could not part with the prize which fell to his family by the death of Carlos II. of Spain.

But Europe was determined that the Bourbons should not be further aggrandized.

Thus in 1701 war broke out with even intensified animosities, and lasted twelve years; directed on the one part by Marlborough, Eugene, and Heinsius, and on the other part by Villars, Vendôme, and Catinat, during which the finances of France were ruined and the people reduced to frightful misery. It was then that Louis melted up the medallions of his former victories, to provide food for his starving soldiers. He offered immense concessions, which the allies against him rejected. He was obliged to continue the contest with exhausted resources and a saddened soul. He offered Marlborough four millions to use his influence to procure a peace; but this general, venal as he was, preferred ambition to money. The despair which once overwhelmed Holland now overtook France. The French marshals encountered a greater general than William III., whose greatness was in the heroism of his soul and his diplomatic talents, rather than in his genius on the battle-field. But Marlborough, who led the allies, never lost a battle, nor besieged a fortress he did not take. His master-stroke was to transfer his operations from Flanders to the Danube. At Blenheim was fought one of the decisive battles of the world, in which the Teutonic nations were marshalled against the French. The battle of Ramillies completed the

deliverance of Flanders; and Louis, completely humiliated, agreed to give up ten Flemish provinces to the Dutch, and to surrender to the Emperor of Germany all that France had gained since the peace of Westphalia in 1648. He also agreed to acknowledge Anne as Queen of Great Britain, and to banish the Pretender from his dominions; England was to retain Gibraltar, and Spain to cede to the Emperor of Germany her possessions in Italy and the Netherlands. But France, with all her disasters, was not ruined; the treaty of Utrecht, 1713, left Louis nearly all his inherited possessions, except in America.

Louis was now seventy-four, — an old man whose delusions were dispelled, and to whom successive misfortunes had brought grief and shame. He was deprived by death of his son and grandson, who gave promise of rare virtues and abilities; only a feeble infant — his great-grandson — was the heir of the monarchy. All his vast enterprises had failed. He suffered, to all appearance, a righteous retribution for his early passion for military glory. "He had invaded the rights of Holland; and Holland gave him no rest until, with the aid of the surrounding monarchies, France was driven to the verge of ruin. He had destroyed the cities of the Palatinate; and the Rhine provinces became a wall of fire against his armies. He had conspired against liberty in England; and it was

from England that he experienced the most fatal opposition." His wars, from which he had expected glory, ended at last in the curtailment of his original possessions. His palaces, which had excited the admiration of Europe, became the monuments of extravagance and folly. His persecutions, by which he hoped to secure religious unity, sowed the seeds of discontent, anarchy and revolution. He left his kingdom politically weaker than it was when he took it; he entailed nothing but disasters to his heirs. His very grants and pensions were subversive of intellectual dignity and independence. At the close of the seventeenth century the great lights had disappeared; he survived his fame, his generals, his family, and his friends; the infirmities of age oppressed his body, and the agonies of religious fears disturbed his soul. We see no greatness but in his magnificence; we strip him of all claims to genius, and even to enlightened statesmanship, and feel that his undoubted skill in holding the reins of government must be ascribed to the weakness and degradation of his subjects, rather than to his own strength. But the verdicts of the last and present generation of historians, educated with hatred of irresponsible power, may be again reversed, and Louis XIV. may loom up in another age, if not as the *grand monarque* whom his contemporaries worshipped, yet as a man of great natural abilities who made fatal mistakes, and who, like Napoleon after

him, alternately elevated and depressed the nation over which he was called to reign, — not like Napoleon, as a usurper and a fraud, but as an honest, though proud and ambitious, sovereign, who was supposed to rule by divine right, of whom the nations of Europe were jealous, who lived in fear and hatred of his power, and who finally conspired, not to rob him of his throne and confine him to a rock, but to take from him the provinces he had seized and the glory in which he shone.

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XLI.

LOUIS XV.

REMOTE CAUSES OF REVOLUTION.

A. D. 1710–1774.

XLI.

LOUIS XV.

REMOTE CAUSES OF REVOLUTION.

IT is impossible to contemplate the inglorious reign of Louis XV. otherwise than as a more complete development of the egotism which marked the life of his immediate predecessor, and a still more fruitful nursery of those vices and discontents which prepared the way for the French Revolution. It is in fact in connection with that great event that this reign should be considered. The fabric of despotism had already been built by Richelieu, and Louis XIV. had displayed and gloried in its dazzling magnificence, even while he undermined its foundations by his ruinous wars and courtly extravagance. Under Louis XV. we shall see even greater recklessness in profitless expenditures, and more complete abandonment to the pleasures which were purchased by the burdens and sorrows of his people; we shall see the monarch and his court still more subversive of the prosperity and dignity of the nation, and even indifferent to the signs of that coming

storm which, later, overturned the throne of his grandson, Louis XVI.

And Louis XV. was not only the author of new calamities, but the heir of seventy years' misrule. All the evils which resulted from the wars and wasteful extravagance of Louis XIV. became additional perplexities with which he had to contend. But these evils, instead of removing, he only aggravated by follies which surpassed all the excesses of the preceding reign. If I were asked to point out the most efficient though indirect authors of the French Revolution, I would single out those royal tyrants themselves who sat upon the throne of Henry IV. during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I shall proceed to state the principal events and features which have rendered that reign both noted and ignominious.

In contemplating the long reign of Louis XV., — whom I present as a necessary link in the political history of the eighteenth century, rather than as one of the Beacon Lights of civilization, — we first naturally turn our eyes to the leading external events by which it is marked in history; and we have to observe, in reference to these, that they were generally unpropitious to the greatness and glory of France. Nearly all those which emanated from the government had an unfortunate or disgraceful issue. No success attended the French arms in any quarter of the world,

with the exception of the victories of Marshal Saxe at Fontenoy (1745); and the French lost the reputation they had previously acquired under Henry IV., Condé, Turenne, and Luxembourg. Disgrace attended the generals who were sent against Frederic II., in the Seven Years' War, even greater than what had previously resulted from the contests with the English and the Dutch, and which were brought to a close by the peace of Aix la Chapelle, in 1748. But it was not on the fields of Germany that the greatest disasters happened; the French were rifled of their possessions both in America and in India. Louisbourg yielded to the bravery of New England troops, and finally Canada itself was lost. All dreams of establishing a new empire on the Mississippi and the Gulf of St. Lawrence vanished for ever, while Madras and Calcutta fell into the hands of the English, with all the riches of Mahometan and Mogul empires. During the regency of the Duke of Orleans, — for Louis XV. was an infant five years of age when his great-grandfather died in 1715, — we notice the disgraceful speculations which followed the schemes of Law, and which resulted in the ruin of thousands, and the still greater derangement of the national finances. The most respectable part of the reign of Louis XV. were those seventeen years when the administration was in the hands of Cardinal Fleury, who succeeded the Duke of Bourbon, to whom the

reins of government had been intrusted after the death of the Duke of Orleans, two years before the young King had attained his majority. Though the cardinal was a man of peace, was irreproachable in morals, patriotic in his intentions, and succeeded in restoring for a time the credit of the country, still even he only warded off difficulties, — like Sir Robert Walpole, — instead of bravely meeting them before it should be too late. His timid rule was a negative rather than a positive blessing. But with his death ended all prosperity, and the reign of mistresses and infamous favorites began, — the great feature of the times, on which I shall presently speak more fully, as one of the indirect causes of subsequent revolution.

In singling out and generalizing the evils and public misfortunes of the reign of Louis XV., perhaps the derangement of the finances was the most important in its political results. But for this misfortune the King was not wholly responsible: a vast national debt was the legacy of Louis XIV. This was the fruit of his miserable attempt at self-aggrandizement; this was the residuum of his glories. Yet as a national debt, according to some, is no calamity, but rather a blessing, — a chain of loyalty and love to bind the people together in harmonious action and mutual interest, and especially the middle classes, upon whom it chiefly falls, to the support of a glorious throne, — we must not waste time

by dwelling on the existence of this debt, — a peculiarity which has attended the highest triumphs of civilization, an invention of honored statesmen and patriotic ministers, and perhaps their benignant boon to future generations, — but rather we will look to the way it was sought to be discharged.

Louis XIV. spent in wars fifteen hundred millions of livres, and in palaces about three hundred millions more; and his various other expenses, which could not be well defrayed by taxation, swelled the amount due to his creditors, at his death, to nearly two thousand millions, — a vast sum for those times. The regent, Duke of Orleans, who succeeded him, increased this debt still more, especially by his reckless and infamous prodigalities, under the direction of his prime minister, — his old friend and tutor, — Cardinal Dubois. At last his embarrassments were so great that the wheels of government were likely to stop. His friend, the Duc de Saint Simon, one of the great patricians of the court, proposed, as a remedy, national bankruptcy, — affirming that it would be a salutary lesson to the rich plebeian capitalists not to lend their money. An ingenious Scotch financier, however, proposed a more palatable scheme, which was, to make use of the credit of the nation for a bank, the capital of which should be guaranteed by shares in the Mississippi Company. John Law, already a wealthy and prosperous banker, proposed to increase the paper

currency, and supersede the use of gold and silver. His offer was accepted, and his bank became a royal one, its bills going at once into circulation. Now, as the most absurd delusions existed as to the wealth of Louisiana, and the most boundless faith was placed in Law's financiering; and as only Law's bills could purchase shares in the Company which was to make everybody's fortune, — gold and silver flowed to his bank. The shares of the Company continued to rise in value, and bank-bills were indefinitely issued. In a little while (1719), six hundred and forty millions of livres in these bills were in circulation, and soon after nearly half of the national debt was paid off; in other words, people had been induced to exchange government securities, to the amount of eight hundred millions, for the Mississippi stock. They sold consols at Law's bank, and were paid in his bills, with which they bought shares. The bills of the bank were of course redeemable in gold and silver; but for a time nobody wanted gold and silver, so great was the credit of the bank. Moreover, the bank itself was guaranteed by the shares of the Company, which were worth at one period twelve times their original value. John Law, of course, was regarded as a national benefactor. His financiering had saved a nation; and who had ever before heard of a nation being saved by stock-jobbing? All sorts of homage and

honors were showered upon so great a man. His house was thronged with dukes and peers; he became controller-general of the finances, and virtually prime-minister. He was elected a member of the French Academy; his fame extended far and wide, for he was a beneficent deity that had made everybody rich and no one poor. Surely the golden age had come. Paris was crowded with strangers from all parts of the world, who came to see a man whose wisdom surpassed that of Solomon, and who made silver and gold to be as stones in the streets. As everybody had grown rich, twelve hundred new coaches were set up; nothing was seen but new furniture and costly apparel, nothing was felt but universal exhilaration. So great was the delusion, that the stock of the Mississippi Company reached the almost fabulous amount of three thousand six hundred millions, — nearly twice the amount of the national debt. But as Law's bank, where all these transactions were made, revealed none of its transactions, the public were in ignorance of the bills issued and stock created.

At last, the Prince of Conti, — one of the most powerful of the nobles, and a prince of the blood-royal, who had received enormous amounts in bills as the price of his protection, — annoyed to find that his ever-increasing demands were finally resisted, presented his notes at the bank, and of course obtained gold and silver; then other nobles did the same, and then foreign merchants,

until the bank was drained. Then came the panic, then the fall of stocks, then general ruin, then universal despondency and rage. The bubble had burst! Four hundred thousand families, who thought themselves rich, and who had been comfortable, were hopelessly ruined; but the State had got rid of half the national debt, and for a time was clear of embarrassment. The people, however, had been defrauded and deceived by Government, and they rendered in return their secret curses. The foundations of a throne are only secured by the affections of a people; if these are destroyed, one great element of regal power is lost.

Under the administration of Cardinal Fleury (1726–1743) the finances were somewhat improved, since he aimed at economical arrangements, especially in the collection of taxes. He attempted to imitate Sully and Colbert, but without their genius and boldness he effected but little. He had an unfortunate quarrel with the Parliament of Paris, and was obliged to repeal a favorite measure. After his death the country was virtually ruled by the King's mistress, Madame de Pompadour, who displaced ministers at her pleasure, and who encouraged unbounded extravagance. The public deficit increased continually, until it finally amounted to nearly two hundred millions in a single year. In spite of this increasing derangement of the

finances, the court had not the courage or will to face the difficulties, but resorted to new loans and forced contributions, and every form of iniquitous taxation. If a great functionary announced the necessity of economy or order, he was forthwith disgraced. Nothing irritated the court more than any proposal to reduce unnecessary expenses. Nor would any other order, either the nobles or the clergy, consent to make sacrifices.

In such a state of things, a most oppressive system of taxation was the necessary result. In no country in modern times have the burdens of the people been so great. Taxes were imposed to the utmost extent that they were able to bear, without their consent; and upon the slightest resistance or remonstrance they were imprisoned and treated as criminals. So great were the taxes on land, that nearly two-thirds of the whole gross produce, it has been estimated, went to the State, and three quarters of the remainder to the landlord. The peasant thus only received about one-twelfth of the fruit of his labors; and on this pittance his family was supported. Taxes were both direct and indirect, levied upon every article of consumption, upon everything that was imported or exported, upon income, upon capital, upon the transmission of property, upon even the few privileges which were enjoyed. But not one half that was collected went to the royal treasury;

it was wasted by the different collectors and sub-collectors. In addition to the ordinary burdens were enormous monopolies, granted to nobles and courtiers, by which the income of the State was indirectly plundered. The poor man groaned amid his heavy labors and great privations, without exciting compassion or securing redress.

And, in addition to his taxes, the laborer was deprived of all the privileges of freedom. He was injured, down-trodden, mocked, and insulted. The laws were unequal, and gave him no security; game of the most destructive kind was permitted to run at large through the fields, and yet the people were not allowed to shoot a hare or a deer upon their own grounds. Numerous edicts prohibited hoeing and weeding, lest young partridges should be destroyed. The people were bound to repair the roads without compensation, to grind their corn at the landlord's mill, bake their bread in his ovens, and carry their grapes to his wine-press. They had not the benefit of schools, or of institutions which would enable them to improve their minds. They could not rise above the miserable condition in which they were born, or even make their complaints heard. Feudalism, in all its social distinctions, and in all its oppressive burdens, crushed them as with an iron weight, or bound them as with iron fetters. This weight they could not throw off, these fetters they

could not break. There was no alternative but in submission, — forced submission to overwhelming taxes, robberies, insults, and injustice, both from landed proprietors and the officers of the crown.

Those, however, who lived upon the unrequited toil of the people lived out of sight of their sorrows, — not in beautiful châteaux, as their ancestors did, by the side of placid rivers and on the skirts of romantic forests, or amid vineyards and olive-groves, but in the capital or the court. Here, like Roman senators of old, they squandered the money which they had obtained by extortion and corruption of every sort. Amid the palaces of Versailles they displayed all the vanities of dress, all the luxuries of their favored life. Here, as lesser stars, they revolved around the great central orb of regal splendor, proud to belong to another world than that in which the plebeian millions toiled and suffered. At Versailles they attempted to ignore their own humanity, to forget their most pressing duties, and to despise the only pursuits which could have elevated their minds or warmed their hearts.

But they were not great feudal nobles, like the Guises and the Epernons, such as combined to awe even regal power under the House of Valois, — men who could coin money and exercise judicial authority in their own domain, — but timid and subservient courtiers, as embarrassed in their affairs as was the King himself.

Nevertheless, many of the ancient privileges of feudalism were enjoyed by them. They were exempt from many taxes which oppressed merchants and farmers; they alone were appointed to command in the army and navy; they alone were made prelates and dignitaries in the Church; they were comparatively free from arrest when their crimes were against society and God rather than the government; they were distinguished from the plebeian class by dress as well as by privileges; and they only had access to court and a share in the plunder of the kingdom. Craving greater excitements than that which even Versailles afforded, they built, in the Faubourg St. Germain, those magnificent hotels which are still the dreary but imposing monuments of aristocratic pride; and here they plunged into every form of excess and folly for which Paris has always been distinguished. But it was in their splendid equipages, and in their boxes at the opera, that they displayed the most striking contrast to the habits of the plebeian people with whom they were surrounded. Their embroidered vests, their costly silks and satins, their emerald and diamond buckles, their point-lace ruffles, their rare furs, their jewelled rapiers, and their perfumed handkerchiefs were peculiar to themselves, — for in those days wealthy shopkeepers, and even the daughters of prosperous notaries, could ill afford such luxuries, and were scarcely allowed to

shine in them if they would. A velvet coat then cost more than one thousand francs; while the ruffs and frills, and diamond studs and knee-buckles, and other appendages to the dress of a gentleman, swelled the amount to scarcely less than forty thousand francs, or sixteen hundred louis-d'or. If a distinguished advocate was admitted to the presence of royalty, he must appear in simple black. Gorgeous dresses were reserved only for the *noblesse*, some one hundred and fifty thousand privileged persons; all the rest were *roturiers*, marked by some emblem of meanness or inferiority, whatever might be their intellectual and moral worth. Never were the *noblesse* more enervated; and yet they always appeared in a mock-heroic costume, with swords dangling at their sides, or hats cocked after a military fashion on their heads. As the strength of Samson of old was in his locks, so the degenerate nobles of this period guarded with especial care these masculine ornaments of the person; and so great was the contagion for wigs and hair-powder, that twelve hundred shops existed in Paris to furnish this aristocratic luxury. The muses of Rome in the days of her decline condescended to sing on the arts of cookery and the sublime occupations of hunting and fishing; so in the heroic times of Louis XV. the genius of France soared to comprehend the mysteries of the toilet. One eminent *savant*, in this department of philosophical

wisdom, absolutely published a bulky volume on the *principles* of hair-dressing, and followed it — so highly was it prized — by a no less ponderous supplement. This was the time when the *cuisine* of nobles was as famous as their toilets, and when recipes for different dishes were only equalled in variety by the epigrams of ribald poets. It was a period not merely of degrading follies, but of shameless exposure of them, — when men boasted of their gallantries, and women joked at their own infirmities; and when hypocrisy, if it was ever added to their other vices, only served to make them more ridiculous and unnatural. The rouge with which they painted their faces, and the powder which they sprinkled upon their hair were not used to give them the semblance of youthful beauty, but rather to impart the purple hues of perpetual drunkenness, such as Rubens gave to his Bacchanalian deities, united with the blanched whiteness of premature old age. Licentiousness without shame, drunkenness without rebuke, gambling without honor, and frivolity without wit characterized, alas, a great proportion of that "upper class" who disdained the occupations and sneered at the virtues of industrial life.

But these dissipated courtiers had a model constantly before their eyes, whose more excessive follies it were difficult to rival; and this was the King himself, whom the whole nation was called upon to obey.

If Louis XIV. was a Nebuchadnezzar, unapproachable from pride, Louis XV. was a Sardanapalus in effeminacy and insouciant revelries. The shameless infamies of his life were too revolting to bear more than a passing allusion; and I should blush to tear away the historic veil which covers up his vices from the common eye. I shrink from showing to what depths humanity can sink, even when clothed in imperial purple and seated on the throne of state. The countless memoirs of that wicked age have however, exposed to the indignant eye of posterity the regal debaucheries of Versailles and the pollutions of the Parc aux Cerfs,—that infamous seraglio which cost the State one hundred millions of livres, at the lowest estimate. And this was but a part of the great system of waste and folly. Five hundred millions of the national debt were incurred for expenses too ignominious to be even named The King, however, was not fond of pomp; it was fatiguing for him to bear, and he generally shut himself from the sight and intercourse of any but convivial friends, — no, not friends, for to absolute monarchs the pleasures of friendship are denied; I should have said, the panderers to his degrading pleasures. Never did the Papal court at Avignon or Rome, even in the worst ages of mediæval darkness, witness more scandalous enormities than those which disgraced the whole reign of Louis XV., either in the days of his minority, when

the kingdom was governed by the Duke of Orleans, or in his latter years, when the Duke of Choiseul was the responsible adviser of the crown. The Palais Royal, the Palais Luxembourg, the Trianon, and Versailles were alternately scenes of excesses which would have disgraced the reigns of the most degenerate of Saracenic caliphs. So vile was the court, that a celebrated countess one day said, at a public festival, that "God, after having formed man, took the mud which was left, and made the souls of princes and footmen."

And the King hated business as much as he hated pomp. Unlike his predecessor, he left everything in the hands of his servants. Nothing wearied him so much as an interview with a minister, or a dispatch from a general. In the society of his mistresses he abnegated his duties as a monarch, and the labors of his life were employed in gratifying their resentments and humoring their caprices. Their complaints were more potent than the suggestions of ministers, or the remonstrances of judges. In idle frivolities his time was passed, neglectful of the great interests which were intrusted to him to guard; and the only attainment of which he was proud was a knack of making tarts and bon-bons, with which he frequently regaled his visitors.

And yet, in spite of these ignoble tastes and pursuits, the King was by no means deficient in natural

abilities. He was much superior to even Louis XIV. in logical acumen and sprightly wit. He was an agreeable companion, and could appreciate every variety of talents. No man in his court perceived more clearly than he the tendency of the writings of philosophers which were then fermenting the germs of revolution. "His sagacity kept him from believing in Voltaire, even when he succeeded in deceiving the King of Prussia." He was favorable to the Jesuits, though he banished them from the realm; perceiving and feeling that they were his true friends and the best supports of his absolute throne, — and yet he banished them from his kingdom. He was hostile too, in his heart, to the very philosophers whom he invited to his table, and knew that they sought to undermine his power. He simply had not the moral energy to carry out the plans of that despotism to which he was devoted. Sensuality ever robs a man of the advantages and gifts which reason gives, even though they may be bestowed to an extraordinary degree. There is no more impotent slavery than that to which the most gifted intellects have been occasionally doomed. Self-indulgence is sure to sap every element of moral strength, and to take away from genius itself all power, except to sharpen the stings of self-reproach. "Louis XV. was not insensible to the dangers which menaced his throne, and would have despoiled the Parliament of the right of remonstrance;

would have imposed on the Jansenists the yoke of Papal supremacy; would have burned the books of the philosophers, and have sent their authors to work out their system within the gloomy dungeons of the Bastile;" but he had not the courage, nor the moral strength, nor the power of will. He was enslaved by his vices, and by those who pandered to them; and he could not act either the king or the man. Seeing the dangers, but feeling his impotence, he affected levity, and exclaimed to his courtiers "Après nous le déluge,"—a prediction which only uncommon sagacity could have prompted. Immersed however in unworthy pleasures, he gave himself not much concern for the future; and this career of self-abandonment continued to the last, even after satiety and *ennui* had deprived the appetites of the power to please. His latter days were of course melancholy, and his miseries resulted as much from the perception of the evils to come as from the failure of the pleasures of sense. A languor, from which he was with difficulty ever roused, oppressed his life. Deaf, incapable of being amused, prematurely worn out with bodily infirmities, hated and despised by the whole nation, he dragged out his sixty-fourth year, and died of the small-pox, which he caught in one of his visits to the Parc aux Cerfs; and his loathsome remains were hastily hurried into a carriage, and deposited in the vaults of St. Denis.

As, however, during this long reign of fifty-eight years, women were the presiding geniuses of the court and the virtual directors of the kingdom, I cannot give a faithful portrait of the times without some allusion, at least, to that woman who was as famous in her day as Madame de Montespan was during the most brilliant period of the reign of Louis XIV. I single out Madame de Pompadour from the crowd of erring and infirm females who bartered away their souls for the temporary honors of Versailles. Not that proud peeress whom she displaced, the Duchesse de Châteauroux; not that low-born and infamous character by whom she was succeeded, Du Barry; not the hundreds of other women who were partners or victims of guilty pleasures, and who descended unlamented and unhonored to their ignominious graves, are here to be alluded to. But Madame de Pompadour is a great historical personage, because with her are identified the fall of the Jesuits in France, the triumph of philosophers and economists, the disgrace of ministers, and the most outrageous prodigality which ever scandalized a nation. Louis XV. was almost wholly directed by this infamous favorite. She named and displaced the controllers-general, and she herself received annually nearly fifteen hundred thousand livres, besides hotels, palaces, and estates. She was allowed to draw bills upon the treasury without specifying the service, and those who incurred

her displeasure were almost sure of being banished from the court and kingdom, and perhaps sentenced, by *lettre de cachet*, to the dreary cells of the Bastille. She virtually had the appointment of the prelates of the Church and of the generals of the army; and so great was her ascendency that all persons, whatsoever their rank, found it expedient to pay their homage to her. Even Montesquieu praised her intellect, and Voltaire her beauty, and Maria Theresa wrote flattering letters to her. The prime minister was her tool and agent, since royalty itself yielded to her sway; even the proud ladies of the royal family condescended to flatter and to honor her. Sprung only from the middle ranks of society, she yet assumed the airs of a princess of the blood.

From her earliest years, long before she was admitted to the court, it had been the dream of this woman to seduce the King. Her father was butcher to the Invalides, and she spent nearly all the money she could command in a costly present to a great duchess, the Princess Conti, in order to be presented. She played high, and won — not a royal heart, but the royal fancy. Her dress, manners, and extraordinary beauty increased the impression she had once before made at a hunting-party; and after the levée she was sent for, and became virtually the minister of the realm. She was unquestionably a woman of great intellect,

as well as of tact and beauty, and even manifested a sympathy with some sorts of intellectual excellence. She was the patroness of artists, philosophers, and poets; but she liked those best who were distinguished for their infidel or licentious speculations. She was the friend of those economists and philosophers who sapped the foundations of the social system. An imperious and insolent hauteur and reckless prodigality were her most marked peculiarities, — just such as were to be expected in an unprincipled woman raised suddenly to high position. In spite of her power, she did not escape the malignant stings of envenomed rivals or anonymous satirists. "She was rallied on the baseness of her origin; she avenged herself by making common cause with those philosophers who overturned the ancient order." She was both mistress and politician, but her politics and alliances subverted the throne which gave her all her glory. Her ascendency of course rested on her power of administering to the tastes and pleasures of the King, and she showed genius in the variety of amusements which she invented. She reigned twenty years, and lost her empire only by death. Madame de Maintenon had maintained her ascendency over Louis XIV. by the exercise of those virtues which extorted his respect, but Madame de Pompadour by the faculty of charming the senses. It was by her that Versailles was enriched with the most precious and

beautiful of its countless wonders. Her own collection of pictures, cameos, antiques, crystals, porcelains, vases, gems, and articles of *vertu* was esteemed the richest and most valuable in the kingdom, and after her death it took six months to dispose of it. Her library was valued at more than a million of francs, and contained some of the rarest manuscripts and most curious books in France. The sums, however, which she spent on literary curiosities or literary men were small compared with the expenses of her toilet, of her *fêtes*, her balls, and her palaces. And all these expenses were open as the day in the eyes of a nation suffering from ruinous taxation, from famine, and the shame of unsuccessful war!

We are impressed with the blind and suicidal measures which all those connected with the throne instigated or encouraged in this reign, — from the King to the most infamous of his mistresses. Whoever pretended to give his aid to the monarchy helped to subvert it by the very measures which he proposed. "The Duke of Orleans, when he patronized Law, gave a shock to the whole economical system of the old régime. When this Scotch financier said to the powerful aristocracy around him, 'Silver is only to you the means of circulation, beyond this it belongs to the country,' he announced the ruin of the glebe and the fall of feudal prejudices. The bankruptcies which

followed the bursting of his bubble weakened the potent charm of the word 'honor,' on which was based the stability of the throne." The courtiers, when they blazed in jewels, in embroidered silks and satins, in sumptuous equipages, and in all the costly ornaments of their times, gave employment and importance to a host of shop-keepers and handicraftsmen, who grew rich, as those who bought of them grew poor. The wealth of bankers, brokers, mercers, jewellers, tailors, and coach-makers dates to these times, — those prosperous and fortunate members of the middle-class who "inhabited the Place Vendôme and the Place des Victoires, as the nobles dwelt in the Rue de Grenelle and the Rue St. Dominique. The nobles ruined themselves by the extravagance into which they were led by the court, and their châteaux and parks fell into the hands of financiers, lawyers, and merchants, who, taking the titles of their new estates, became a parvenu aristocracy which excited the jealousy of the old and divided its ranks." The inferior, but still prosperous class, the shop-keepers, also equally advanced in intelligence and power. In those dark and dingy back-rooms, in which for generations their ancestors had been immured, they now discussed their rights, and retailed the scandals which they heard. They read the sarcasms of the poets and the theories of the new philosophers. Even the tranquillity which succeeded

inglorious war was favorable to the rise of the middle classes; and the Revolution was as much the product of the discontent engendered by social improvements as of the frenzy produced by hunger and despair. The court favored the improvements of Paris, especially those designed for public amusements. The gardens of the Tuileries were embellished, the Champs Elysées planted with trees, and pictures were exhibited in the grand salon of the Louvre. The Théâtre Français, the Royal Opera, the Opera Comique, and various halls for balls and festivals were then erected, — those fruitful nurseries of future clubs, those poisoned wells of popular education. Nor were charities forgotten with the building of the Pantheon and the extension of the Boulevards. The Hospital des Enfants-Trouvés allowed mothers, unseen and unheard, to bequeath their children to the State.

There were two events connected with the reign of Madame de Pompadour — I do not say of the King, or his queen, or his ministers, for philosophical history compels us to confine our remarks chiefly to great controlling agencies, whether they be sovereigns or people; to such a man as Peter the Great, when one speaks of a semi-barbarous nation, to ideas, when we describe popular revolutions — which had a great influence in unsettling the kingdom, although brought about in no inconsiderable measure by this unscrupulous mistress

of the King. These were the expulsion of the Jesuits, and the triumph of the philosophers.

In regard to the first, I would say, that Madame de Pompadour did not like the Jesuits; not because they were the enemies of liberal principles, not because they were the most consistent advocates and friends of despotism in all its forms, intellectual, religious, and political, or the writers of casuistic books, or the perverters of educational instruction, or boastful missionaries in Japan and China, or cunning intriguers in the courts of princes, or artful confessors of the great, or uncompromising despots in the schools, — but because they interfered with her ascendency. It is true she despised their sophistries, ridiculed their pretensions, and detested their government; but her hostility was excited, not because they aspired like her, like the philosophers, like the popes, like the press in our times, to a participation in the government of the world, but because they disputed her claims as one of the powers of the age. The Jesuits were scandalized that such a woman should usurp the reins of state, especially when they perceived that she mocked and defied them; and they therefore refused to pay her court, and even conspired to effect her overthrow. But they had not sufficiently considered the potency of her wrath, or the desperate means of revenge to which she could resort; nor had they considered those other in-

fluences which had been gradually undermining their influence, — even the sarcasms of the Jansenists, the ridicule of the philosophers, and the invectives of the parliaments. Only one or two favoring circumstances were required to kindle the smothered fires of hatred into a blazing flame, and these were furnished by the attempted assassination of the King, in his garden at Versailles, by Damiens the fanatic, and the failure of La Valette the Jesuit banker and merchant at Martinique. Then, when the nation was astounded by their political conspiracies and their commercial gambling, to say nothing of the perversion of their truth, did their arch-enemy, the King's mistress, use her power over the King's minister, her own creature, the Duc de Choiseul, to decree the confiscation of their goods and their banishment from the realm; nay, to induce the Pope himself, in conjunction with the entreaties of all the Bourbon courts of Europe, to take away their charter and suppress their order. The fall of the Jesuits has been already alluded to in another volume, and I will not here enlarge on that singular event brought about by the malice of a woman whom they had ventured to despise. It is easy to account for her hatred and the general indignation of Europe. It is not difficult to understand that the decline of that great body in those virtues which originally elevated them, should be followed by animosities which

would undermine their power. We can see why their moral influence should pass away, even when they were in possession of dignities and honors and wealth. But it is a most singular fact that the Pope himself, with whose interests they were allied, — their natural protector, the head of the hierarchy which they so constantly defended, — should have been made the main agent in their temporary humiliation. Yet Clement XIV. — the weak and timid Ganganelli — was forced to this suicidal act. Old Hildebrand would have fought like a lion and died like a dog, rather than have stooped to such autocrats as the Bourbon princes. A judicial and mysterious blindness, however, was sent upon Clement; his strength for the moment was paralyzed, and he signed the edict which dispersed the best soldiers that sustained the interests of absolutism in Europe.

The effect of the suppression of the order in France was both good and ill. The event unquestionably led to the propagation of an impious philosophy and all sorts of crude opinions and ill-digested theories, both in government and religion, in the schools, the salons, and the pulpits of France. The press, relieved of its most watchful and jealous spies, teemed with pamphlets and books of the most licentious character. The good and evil powers were both unchained and suffered to go free about the land, and to do what work they could.

There are many who feel that this combat is necessary for the full development of human strength and virtue; who maintain that the good is much more powerful than the evil in any age of moral experiences; and who believe that angels of light will, on our mundane arena, prevail over angels of darkness, — that one truth is stronger than one thousand lies, and that two can put ten thousand to flight. There are others, again, who think that there is a vitality in error as well as a vitality in truth, as proved seemingly by the prevalence of Pagan falsehoods, Mohammedan empires, and Papal superstitions. But to whatever party clearness of judgment belongs, one thing is historically certain, — that never was poor human nature more puzzled by false guides, more tempted by appetites and passions, more enslaved by the lust of the eye and the pride of life, than during the latter years of the reign of Louis XV. Never was there a period or a country in Christendom more frivolous, pleasure-seeking, sceptical, irreligious, vain, conceited, and superficial than during the reign of Madame de Pompadour. No; never was there a time of so little moral elevation among the great mass, or when so few great enterprises were projected for the improvement of society.

And it was from society thus disordered, inexperienced, and godless that all restraints were removed from the ancient and venerated guardians of youth,

of religion, and of literature. Judge what must have been the effects; judge between these opposing theories, whether it were better to have the institutions of society guarded by selfish, ambitious, and narrow-minded priests, or to have the flood-gates of vastly preponderating evil influences opened upon society already reeling in the intoxication of the senses, or madly raving from the dethronement of reason, the abnegation of religious duties, and the extinction of the light of faith. I would not say that either one or the other of these horrible alternatives is necessary or probable in these times, that *we* are compelled to choose between them, or that we ever shall be compelled; but simply, that, in the middle of the eighteenth century, and in France,—that semi-Catholic and semi-infidel nation,—there existed on the one hand a most execrable spiritual despotism exercised by the Jesuits, and on the other a boundless ferment of destructive and revolutionary principles, operating on a people generally inclined, and in some cases abandoned, to every folly and vice. This despotism, while it was selfish and unwarrantable, still had in view the guardianship of morals and literature,—to restrain men from crimes by working on their fears; but society, while it sought to free itself from hypocritical and oppressive leaders, also sought to remove all social and moral restraints, and to plunge into reckless and dangerous experiments.

It was a war between these two social powers, — between unlawful despotism and unsanctified license. We are to judge, not which was the better, but which was the worse.

One thing, however, is certain, — that Madame de Pompadour, in whom was centred so much power, threw her influence against the Jesuits, and in favor of those who were not seeking to build up literature and morals on a sure and healthy foundation, but rather secretly and artfully to undermine the whole intellectual and social fabric, under the plea of liberty and human rights. Everybody admits that the writings of the philosophers gave a great impulse to the revolutionary storm which afterwards broke out. Ideas are ever most majestic, whether they are good or evil. Men pass away, but principles are indestructible and of perpetual power. As great and fearful agencies in the period we are contemplating, they are worthy of our notice.

Although the great lights which adorned the literature of the preceding reign no longer shone, — such geniuses as Molière, Boileau, Racine, Fénelon, Bossuet, Pascal, and others, — still the eighteenth century was much more intellectual and inquiring than is generally supposed. Under Louis XIV. intellectual independence had been nearly extinguished. His reign was intellectually and spiritually a gloomy calm between two won-

derful periods of agitation. All acquiesced in his cold, heartless, rigid rule, being content to worship him as a deity, or absorbed in the excitements of his wars, or in the sorrows and burdens which those wars brought in their train. But under Louis XV. the people began to meditate on the causes of their miseries, and to indulge in those speculations which stimulated their discontents or appealed to their intellectual pride. Not from La Rochelle, not from the cells of Port Royal, not from remonstrating parliaments did the voices of rebellion come: the genius of Revolution is not so poor as to be obliged to make use of the same class of instruments, or repeat the same experiments, in changing the great aspects of human society. Nor will she allow, if possible, those who guard the fortresses which she wishes to batter down to be suspicious of her combatants. Her warriors are ever disguised and masked, or else concealed within some form of a protecting deity, such as the fabled horse which the doomed Trojans received within their walls. The court of France did not recognize in those plausible philosophers, whose writings had such a charm for cultivated intellect, the miners and sappers of the monarchy. Only one class of royalists understood them, and these were the Jesuits whom the court had exiled. Not even Frederic the Great, when he patronized Voltaire, was aware what an insidious foe was domiciled in his palace,

with all his sycophancy of rank, with all his courtly flattering. In like manner, when the grand seigneurs and noble dames of that aristocratic age wept over the sorrows of the "New Héloïse," or craved that imaginary state of untutored innocence which Rousseau so morbidly described, or admired those brilliant generalizations of laws which Montesquieu had penned, or laughed at the envenomed ironies of Voltaire, or quoted the atheistic doctrines of D'Alembert and Diderot, or enthusiastically discussed the economical theories of Dr. Quesnay and old Marquis Mirabeau, — that stern father of him who, both in his intellectual power and moral deformity, was alike the exponent and the product of the French Revolution, — when the blinded court extolled and diffused the writings of these new apostles of human rights, they little dreamed that they would be still more admired among the people, and bring forth the Brissots, the Condorcets, the Marats, the Dantons the Robespierres, of the next generation. I would not say that their influence was wholly bad, for in their attacks on the religion and institutions of their country they subverted monstrous usurpations. But whatever was their ultimate influence, they were doubtless among the most efficient agents in overturning the throne; they were, in reality, the secret enemies of those by whom they were patronized and honored. "They cannot, indeed, claim the merit of being the first in

France who opened the eyes of the nation; for Fénelon had taught even to Louis XIV., in his immortal 'Telemaque,' the duties of a king; Racine, in his 'Germanicus,' had shown the accursed nature of irresponsible despotism; Molière, in his 'Tartuffe,' had exposed the vices of priestly hypocrisy; Pascal, in his 'Provincial Letters,' had revealed the wretched sophistries of the Jesuits; Bayle even, in his 'Critical Dictionary,' had furnished materials for future sceptics."

But the hostilities of all these men were united in Voltaire, who in nearly two hundred volumes, and with a fecundity of genius perfectly amazing and unparalleled, in poetry, in history, in criticism, — yet without striking originality or profound speculations, — astonished and delighted his generation. This great and popular writer clothed his attacks on ecclesiastical power, and upon Christianity itself, in the most artistic and attractive language, — clear, simple, logical, without pedantry or ostentation, — and enlivened it with brilliant sarcasms, appealing to popular prejudices, and never soaring beyond popular appreciation. Never did a man have such popularity; never did a famous writer leave so little to posterity which posterity can value.

While Voltaire was indirectly undermining the religious convictions of mankind, the Encyclopedists more directly attacked the sources of religious belief, and openly denied what Voltaire had doubted. But neither

Diderot nor D'Alembert made such shameless assaults as the apostles of a still more atheistic school,— such men as Helvetius and the Baron d'Holback, who advocated undisguised selfishness, and attributed all virtuous impulses to animal sensation. More dangerous still than these ribald blasphemers were those sentimental and morbid expounders of humanity of whom Rousseau was the type,— a man of more genius perhaps than any I have named, but the most egotistical of that whole generation of dreamers and sensualists who prepared the way for revolution. He was the father of those agitating ideas which spread over Europe and reached America. He gave utterance in his eloquent writings to those mighty watch-words, "Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality," that equally animated Mirabeau, Robespierre, and Jefferson. But the writings of the philosophers will again be alluded to in the next lecture, as among the efficient causes of the French Revolution.

When we contemplate those financial embarrassments which arose from half a century of almost universal war, and those awful burdens which bent to the dust, in suffering and shame, the whole people of a great country; when we consider the absurd and wicked distinctions which separated man from man, and the settled hostility of the clergy to all means of intellectual and social improvement; when we re-

member the unparalleled vices of a licentious court, the ignominious negligence of the government to the happiness and wants of those whom it was its duty to protect, and the shameless insults which an infamous woman was allowed to heap upon the nation; and then when we bear in mind all the elements of disgust, of discontent, of innovation, and of reckless and impious defiance, — can we wonder that a revolution was inevitable, if society is destined to be progressive and man ever to be allowed to break his fetters?

On that Revolution I cannot enter. I leave the subject as the winds began to howl and the rains began to fall and the floods began to rise, and all together to beat upon that house which was built upon the sand.

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XLII.

PETER THE GREAT.

HIS SERVICES TO RUSSIA.

A. D. 1672–1725.

XLII.

PETER THE GREAT.

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IF I were called upon to name the man who, since Charlemagne, has rendered the greatest services to his country, I should select Peter the Great. I do not say that he is one of the most interesting characters that has shone in the noble constellations of illustrious benefactors whom Europe has produced. Far otherwise: his career is not so interesting to us as that of Hildebrand, or Elizabeth, or Cromwell, or Richelieu, or Gustavus Adolphus, or William III., or Louis XIV., or Frederic II., or others I might mention. I have simply to show an enlightened barbarian toiling for civilization, a sort of Hercules cleansing Augean stables and killing Nemean lions; a man whose labors were prodigious; a very extraordinary man, stained by crimes and cruelties, yet laboring, with a sort of inspired enthusiasm, to raise his country from an abyss of ignorance and brutality. It would be difficult to find a more hard-hearted despot, and yet a more patriotic

sovereign. To me he looms up, even more than Richelieu, as an instrument of Divine Providence. His character appears in a double light, — as benefactor and as tyrant, in order to carry out ends which he deemed useful to his country, and which, we are constrained to admit, did wonderfully contribute to its elevation and political importance.

Peter the Great entered upon his inheritance as absolute sovereign of Russia, when it was an inland and even isolated state, hemmed in and girt around by hostile powers, without access to seas; a vast country indeed, but without a regular standing army on which he could rely, or even a navy, however small. This country was semi-barbarous, more Asiatic than European, occupied by mongrel tribes, living amid snow and morasses and forests, without education, or knowledge of European arts. He left this country, after a turbulent reign, with sea-ports on the Baltic and the Black seas, with a large and powerfully disciplined army, partially redeemed from barbarism, no longer isolated or unimportant, but a political power which the nations had cause to fear, and which, from the policy he bequeathed, has been increasing in resources from his time to ours. To-day Russia stands out as a first-class power, with the largest army in the world; a menace to Germany, a rival of Great Britain in the extension of conquests to the East,

threatening to seize Turkey and control the Black Sea, and even to take possession of Oriental empires which extend to the Pacific Ocean.

Nobody doubts or questions that the rise of Russia to its present proud and threatening position is chiefly owing to the genius and policy of Peter the Great. Peter was a descendant of a patriarch of the Greek Church in Russia, whose name was Romanoff, and who was his great-grandfather. His grandfather married a near relative of the Czar, and succeeded him by election. His father, Alexis, was an able man, and made war on the Turks.

Peter was a child when his father died, and his half-brother Theodore became the Czar. But Theodore reigned only a short time, and Peter succeeded him at the age of ten (1682), the government remaining in the hands of his half-sister, Sophia, a woman of great ability and intelligence, but intriguing and unscrupulous. She was aided by Prince Galitzin, the ablest statesman of Russia, who held the great office of chancellor. This prince, it would seem, with the aid of the general of the Streltzi (the ancient imperial guards) and the cabals of Sophia, conspired against the life of Peter, then seventeen years of age, inasmuch as he began to manifest extraordinary abilities and a will of his own. But the young Hercules strangled the serpent. — sent Galitzin to Siberia, confined his

sister Sophia in a convent for the rest of her days, and assumed the reins of government himself, although a mere youth, in conjunction with his brother John. That which characterized him was a remarkable precocity, greater than that of anybody of whom I have read. At eighteen he was a man, with a fine physical development and great beauty of form, and entered upon absolute and undisputed power as Czar of Muscovy.

In the years of the regency, when the government was in the hands of his half-sister, he did not give promise of those remarkable abilities and that life of self-control which afterwards marked his career.

In his earlier youth he had been surrounded with seductive pleasures, as Louis XIV. had been, by the queen-regent, with a view to *control* him, not oppose him; and he yielded to these pleasures, and is said to have been a very dissipated young man, with his education neglected. But he no sooner got rid of his sister and her adviser, Galitzin, than he seemed to comprehend at once for what he was raised up. The vast responsibilities of his position pressed upon his mind. To civilize his country, to make it politically powerful, to raise it in the scale of nations, to labor for its good rather than for his own private pleasure, seems to have animated his existence. And this aim he pursued from first to last, like a giant of destiny, without

any regard to losses, or humiliations, or defeats, or obstacles.

Chance, or destiny, or Providence, threw in his path the very person whom he needed as a teacher and a Mentor, — a young gentleman from Geneva, whom historians love to call an adventurer, but who occupied the post of private secretary to the Danish minister. Aristocratic pedants call everybody an adventurer who makes his fortune by his genius and his accomplishments. They called Thomas Becket an adventurer in the time of Henry II., and Thomas Cromwell in the reign of Henry VIII. The young secretary to the Danish minister seems to have been a man of remarkable ability, insight, and powers of fascination, based on his intelligence and on knowledge acquired in the first instance in a mercantile house, — as was the success of Thomas Cromwell and Alexander Hamilton.

It was from this young man, whose name was Lefort, whom Peter casually met at dinner at the house of the Danish envoy, that he was made acquainted with the superior discipline of the troops of France and Germany, and the mercantile greatness of Holland and England, — the two things which he was most anxious to understand; since, as he believed, on the discipline of an army and the efficiency of a navy the political greatness of his country must rest. A disciplined army would render secure the throne of abso-

lutism, and an efficient navy would open and protect his ports for the encouragement of commerce, — one of the great sources of national wealth. Without commerce and free intercourse with other countries no nation could get money; and without money even an absolute monarch could not reign as he would.

So these two young men took counsel together; and the conviction was settled in the minds of each that there could be no military discipline and no efficient military power so long as the Streltzi — those antiquated and turbulent old guards — could depose and set up monarchs. They settled it, and with the enthusiasm of young men, that before they could get rid of these dangerous troops, — only fit for Oriental or barbaric fighting, — they must create a regiment after their own liking, large enough to form the nucleus of a real European army, and yet not large enough to excite jealousy, — for Sophia was then still regent, and the youthful Peter was supposed to be merely amusing himself. The Swiss "adventurer" — one of the most enlightened men of his age, and full of genius — became colonel of this regiment; and Peter, not thinking he knew anything about true military tactics, and wishing to learn, — and not too proud to learn, being born with disdain of conventionalities and precedents, — entered the regiment as drummer, in sight of his own subjects, who perhaps looked upon the act as a

royal freak, — even as Nero practised fiddling, and Commodus archery, before the Roman people. From drummer he rose to the rank of corporal, and from corporal to sergeant, and so on through all the grades.

That is the way Peter began, — as all great men begin, at the foot of the ladder; for great as it was to be born a prince, it was greater to learn how to be a general. In this fantastic conduct we see three things: a remarkable sagacity in detecting the genius of Lefort, a masterly power over his own will, and a willingness to learn anything from anybody able and willing to teach him, — even as a rich and bright young lady, now and then, when about to assume the superintendence of a great household, condescends to study some of the details of a kitchen, those domestic arts on which depend something of that happiness which is the end and aim of married life. Many a promising domestic hearth is wrecked — such is the weakness of human nature — by the ignorance or disdain of humble acquirements, or what seem humble to fortunate women, and yet which are really steps to a proud ascendency.

We trace the ambition of Peter for commercial and maritime greatness also to a very humble beginning. Whether it was a youthful sport, subsequently directed into a great enterprise, or the plodding intention to create a navy and open sea-ports under his own superintendence, it would be difficult to settle. We may

call this beginning a decree of Providence, an inspiration of genius, or a passion for sailing a boat; the end was the same, as it came about, — the entrance of Russia into the family of European States.

It would seem that one day, by chance, Peter's attention was directed to a little boat laid up on the banks of a canal which ran through his pleasure-grounds. It had been built by a Dutch carpenter for the amusement of his father. This boat had a keel, — a new thing to him, — and attracted his curiosity. Lefort explained to him that it was constructed to sail against the wind. So the carpenter was summoned, with orders to rig the boat and sail it on the Moskva, the river which runs through Moscow. Peter was delighted; and he soon learned to manage it himself. Then a yacht was built, manned by two men, and it was the delight of Peter to take the helm himself. Shortly five other vessels were built to navigate Lake Peipus; and the ambition of Peter was not satisfied until a still larger vessel was procured at Archangel, in which he sailed on a cruise upon the Frozen Ocean. His taste for navigation became a passion; and once again he embarked on the Frozen Ocean in a ship, determined to go through all the gradations of a sailor's life. As he began as drummer in Lefort's regiment, so he first served as a common drudge who swept the cabin in a Dutch vessel; then he rose to the rank of a servant who kept

up the fire and lighted the pipe of the Dutch skipper; then he was advanced to the duty of unfurling and furling the sails, — and so on, until he had mastered the details of a sailor's life.

Why did he condescend to these mean details? The ambition was planted in him to build a navy under his own superintendence. Wherefore a navy, when he had no sea-ports? But he meant to have sea-ports. He especially needed a fleet on the Volga to keep the Turks and Tartars in awe, and another in the Gulf of Finland to protect his territories from the Swedes. We shall see how subsequently, and in due time, he conquered the Baltic from the Swedes and the Euxine from the Turks. He did not seem to have an ambition for indefinite territorial aggrandizement, but simply to extend his empire to these seas for the purpose of having a free egress and ingress to it by water. He could not Europeanize his empire without sea-ports, for unless Russia had these, she would remain a barbarous country, a vast Wallachia or Moldavia. The expediency and the necessity of these ports were most obvious. But how was he to get them? Only by war, aggressive war. He would seize what he wanted, since he could attain his end in no other way.

Now, I do not propose to whitewash this enlightened but unscrupulous robber. On no recognized principles of morality can he be defended any more than can

Louis XIV. for the invasion of Flanders, or Frederic II. for the seizure of Silesia. He first resolved to seize Azof, the main port on the little sea of that name which opens out into the Black Sea, and which belonged to the Turks. It was undoubted robbery; but its possession would be an immense advantage to Russia. Of course, that seizure could not be justified either by the laws of God or the laws of nations. "Thou shalt not steal" is an eternally binding law for nations and for individuals. Peter knew that he had no right to this important city; but at the same time he knew that its possession would benefit Russia. So we are compelled to view this monarch as a robber, taking what was not his, as Ahab seized Naboth's vineyard; but taking it for the benefit of his country, which Ahab did not. He knew it was a political crime, but a crime to advance the civilization of his empire. The only great idea of his life was the welfare of his country, by any means. For his country he would sacrifice his character and public morality. Some might call this an exalted patriotism, — I call it unmitigated jesuitism; which seems to have been the creed of politicians, and even of statesmen, for the last three hundred years. All that Peter thought of was *the end;* he cared nothing for the *means.* I wonder why Carlyle or Froude has not bolstered up and defended this great hyperborean giant for doing evil that good may come. Casuistry is in

their line; the defence of scoundrels seems to be their vocation.

Well, then, bear in mind that Peter, feeling that he must have Azof for the good of Russia, irrespective of right or wrong, went straight forward to his end. Of course he knew he must have a fight with Turkey to gain this prize, and he prepared for such a fight. Turkey was not then what it is now, — ripe fruit to be gobbled up by Russia when the rest of Europe permits it; but Turkey then was a great power. At that very time two hundred thousand Turks were besieging Vienna, which would have fallen but for John Sobieski. But obstacles were nothing to Peter; they were simply things to be surmounted, at any sacrifice of time or money or men. So with the ships he had built he sailed down the River Don and attacked Azof. He was foiled, not beaten. He never seemed to know when he was beaten, and he never seemed to care. That hard, iron man marched to his object like a destiny. What he had to do was to take Azof against an army of Turks. So, having failed in the first campaign, through the treachery of one Jacobs who had been employed in the artillery, he tried it again the next year and succeeded, his army being commanded by General Gordon, a Scotchman, while he himself served only as ensign or lieutenant. This port was the key of Palus Mæotis, and opened to him the Black Sea, on which he resolved

to establish a navy. He had now an army modelled after the European fashion, according to the suggestions of Lefort, whose regiment became the model of other regiments. Five thousand men were trained and commanded by General Gordon. Lefort raised another corps of twelve thousand, from the Streltzi chiefly. These were the forces, in conjunction with the navy, with which he reduced Azof. He now returns to Moscow, and receives the congratulations of the boyars, or nobles, — that class who owned the landed property of Russia and cultivated it by serfs. He made heavy contributions on these nobles, and also on the clergy, — for it takes money to carry on a war, and money he must have somehow.

These forced contributions and the changes which were made in the army were not beheld with complacency. The old guard, the Streltzi, were particularly disgusted. The various innovations were very unpopular, especially those made in reference to the dress of the new soldiers. The result of all these innovations and discontents was a conspiracy to take his life; which, however, was seasonably detected and severely punished.

An extraordinary purpose now seized the mind of the Czar, which was to travel in the various countries of Europe, and learn something more especially about ship-building, on which his heart was set. He

also wished to study laws, institutions, sciences, and arts; and in order to study them effectually, he resolved to travel incognito. Hitherto he had not been represented in the European courts; so he appointed an embassy of extraordinary magnificence to proceed in the first instance to Holland, then the foremost mercantile state of Europe. The retinue consisted of four secretaries, at the head of whom was Lefort, twelve nobles, fifty guards, and other persons, — altogether to the number of two hundred. As they travelled through Prussia they were received with great distinction, and the whole journey seems to have been a Bacchanalian progress. There were nothing but *fêtes* and banquets to his honor, and the Russians proved to have great capacity for drinking. At Königsberg he left his semi-barbaric embassy to their revels, and proceeded rapidly and privately to Holland, hired a small room — kitchen and garret — for lodgings, and established himself as journeyman carpenter, with a resolute determination to learn the trade of a ship-carpenter. He dressed like a common carpenter, and lived like one, with great simplicity. When he was not at work in the dock-yard with his broad axe, he amused himself by sailing a yacht, dressed like a Dutch skipper, with a red jacket and white trousers. He was a marked personage, even had it not been known that he was the Czar, — a tall, robust, active man of twenty-five, with a

fierce look and curling brown locks, free from all restraint, seeing but little of the ambassadors who had followed him, and passing his time with ship-builders and merchants, and adhering rigidly to all the regulations of the dock-yards. He spent nine months in this way at hard labor, and at the end of that time had mastered the art of ship-building in all its details, had acquired the Dutch language, and had seen what was worth seeing of Amsterdam, — showing an unbounded curiosity and indefatigable zeal, frequenting the markets and the shops, attending lectures in anatomy and surgery, learning even how to draw teeth; visiting museums and manufactories, holding intercourse with learned men, and making considerable proficiency in civil engineering and the science of fortification. Nothing escaped his eager inquiries. "Wat is dat?" was his perpetual exclamation. "He devoured every morsel of knowledge with unexampled voracity." Never was seen a man on this earth with a more devouring appetite for knowledge of every kind; storing up in his mind everything he saw, with a view of introducing improvements into Russia. To see this barbaric emperor thus going to school, and working with his own hands, insensible to heat and cold and weariness, with the single aim of benefiting his countrymen when he should return, is to me one of the most wonderful sights of history.

His chosen companion in these labors and visits and pleasures was also one of the most remarkable men of his age. His name was Mentchikof, — originally a seller of pies in the streets of Moscow, who attracted, by his beauty and brightness, the attention of General Lefort, and was made a page in his household, and was as such made known to the Czar, who took a fancy to him, and soon detected his great talents; so that he rose as rapidly as Joseph did in the court of Pharaoh, and became general, governor, prince, regent, with almost autocratic power. The whole subsequent reign of Peter, and of his successor, became identified with Prince Mentchikof, who was prime-minister and grand-vizier, and who forwarded all the schemes of his master with consummate ability.

After leaving Holland, Peter accepted an invitation of William III. to visit England, and thither he went with his embassy in royal ships, yet still affecting to travel as a private gentleman. He would accept no honors, no public receptions, no state banquets. He came to England, not to receive honors, but to add to his knowledge, and he wished to remain unfettered in his sight-seeing. In England, the same insatiable curiosity marked him as in Holland. He visits the dockyards, and goes to the theatre and the opera, and holds interviews with Quakers and attends their meetings, as well as the churches of the Establishment. The coun-

try-houses of nobles, with their parks and gardens and hedges, filled him with admiration. He was also greatly struck with Greenwich Hospital, which looked to him like a royal palace (as it was originally), and he greatly wondered that the old seedy and frowsy pensioners should be lodged so magnificently. The courts of Westminster surprised him. "Why," said he, in reference to the legal gentlemen in wigs and gowns, "I have but two lawyers in my dominions, and one of them I mean to hang as soon as I return." But while he visited everything, generally in a quiet way, avoiding display and publicity, he was most interested in mechanical inventions and the dock-yards and mock naval combats. It would seem that his private life was simple, although he is accused of eating voraciously, and of drinking great quantities of brandy and sack. If this be true, he certainly reformed his habits, and learned to govern himself, for he was very temperate in his latter days. Men who are very active and perform herculean labors, do not generally belong to the class of gluttons or drunkards. I have read of but few great generals, like Cæsar, or Charlemagne, or William III., or Gustavus Adolphus, or Marlborough, or Cromwell, or Turenne, or Wellington, or Napoleon, who were not temperate in their habits.

After leaving England, the Czar repaired to Vienna, *via* Holland, sending to Russia five hundred persons

whom he took in his employ, — navy captains, pilots, surgeons, gunners, boat-builders, blacksmiths, and various other mechanics, — having an eye to the industrial development of his country; which was certainly better than driving out of his kingdom four hundred thousand honest people, as Louis XIV. did because they were Protestants. But Peter did not tarry long in Vienna, whose military establishments he came to study, being compelled to return hastily to Moscow to suppress a rebellion. He returned a much wiser man; I doubt if any person ever was more improved than he by his travels. What an example to tourists in these times! All travelling (except explorations) is a dissipation and waste of time unless self-improvement is the main object. Pleasure-seeking is the greatest vanity on this earth, for he who *seeks* pleasure never finds it; but it comes when it is a minor consideration.

The apprenticeship of Peter is now completed, and he enters more seriously upon those great labors which have given him an immortality. I am compelled to be brief in stating them.

The first thing he did, on his return, was finally to crush the Streltzi, who fomented treasons and were hostile to reform. He had wisely left General Gordon at Moscow with six thousand soldiers, disciplined after the European fashion. In abolishing the turbulent and prejudicial Streltzi, he is accused of great cruel-

ties. He summarily executed or imprisoned some four thousand of them caught in acts of treason and rebellion, and drafted the rest into distant regiments. He may have been unnecessarily cruel, as critics have accused Oliver Cromwell of being in his treatment of the Irish. But, cruel or not, he got rid of troops he could not trust, and organized soldiers whom he could, — for he must have tools to work with if he would do his work. I neither praise nor condemn his mode of working; I seek to show how he performed his task.

After disbanding rebellious soldiers, he sought to make his army more efficient by changing the dress of the entire army. He did away with the long coat reaching to the heels, something like that which ladies wear in rainy days; and the drawers not unlike petticoats; and the long, bushy beards. He found more difficulty in making this reform than in taking Azof, although aided by Mentchikof, his favorite, fellow-traveller, and prime-minister. He was not content with cutting off the beards of the soldiers and shortening their coats, — he wished to make private citizens do the same; but the uproar and discontent were so great that he was obliged to compromise the matter, and allow the citizens to wear their beards and robes on condition of a heavy tax, graded on ability to pay it. The only class he exempted from the tax were the clergy and the serfs.

Among other reforms he changed the calendar, making the year to begin with January, and abolished the old laws with reference to marriage, by which young people had no power of choice; but he decreed that no marriage should take place unless an intimacy had existed between the parties for at least six months. He instituted balls and assemblies, to soften the manners of the people. He encouraged the theatre, protected science, invited eminent men to settle in Russia, improved the courts of justice, established posts and post-offices, boards of trade, a vigorous police, hospitals, and alms-houses. He imported Saxony sheep, erected linen, woollen, and paper mills, dug canals, suppressed gambling, and fostered industry and art. He aimed to do for Russia what Richelieu and Colbert did for France.

The greatest opposition to his reforms came from the clergy, with the Patriarch at their head, — a personage of great dignity and power, ruling an *imperium in imperio.* Peter had no hostility to the Greek religion, nor to the clergy. Like Charlemagne, he was himself descended from an ecclesiastical family. But finding the clergy hostile to civil and social reforms, he sought to change the organization of the Church itself. He did not interfere with doctrines, nor discipline, nor rites, nor forms of worship; but he unseated the Patriarch, and appointed instead a consistory, the members of which were nom-

inated by himself. Like Henry VIII., he virtually made himself the head of the Church, — that is, the supreme direction of ecclesiastical affairs was given to those whom he controlled, and not to the Patriarch, whose power had been supreme in religious matters, — more than Papal, almost Druidical. In former reigns the Patriarch had the power of life and death in his own tribunals; and when he rode to church on Palm Sunday, in his emblazoned robes, the Czar walked uncovered at his side, and held the bridle of his mule. It is a mark of the extraordinary power of Peter that he was enabled to abolish this great dignity without a revolution or bloodshed; and he not only abolished the patriarchal dignity, but he seized the revenues of the Patriarch, taxed the clergy, and partially suppressed monasteries, decreeing that no one should enter them under fifty years of age; yea, he even decreed universal toleration of religion, except to the Jesuits, whom he hated, as did William III. and Frederic II. He caused the Bible to be translated into the Slavonic language, and freely circulated it. And he prosecuted these reforms while he was meditating, or was engaged in, great military enterprises.

I approach now the great external event of Peter's life, his war with Charles XII., brought about in part by his eagerness to get a sea-port on the Baltic, and in part by the mad ambition of the Swedish king, determined

to play the part of Alexander. The aggressive party in this war, however, was Peter. He was resolved to take part of the Swedish territories for mercantile and maritime purposes; so he invaded Sweden with sixty thousand men. Charles, whose military genius was not appreciated by the Czar, had only eight thousand troops to oppose the invasion; but they were veterans, and fought on the defensive, and had right on their side. This latter is a greater thing in war than is generally supposed; for although war is in our own times a mechanism in a great measure, still moral considerations underlie even physical forces, and give a sort of courage which is hard to resist. The result of this invasion was the battle of Narva, when Peter was disgracefully beaten, as he ought to have been. But he bore his defeat complacently. He is reported as saying that he knew the Swedes would have the advantage at first, but that they would teach him how to beat them at last. I doubt this. I do not believe a general ever went into battle with a vastly overwhelming force when he did not expect victory. But the great victory won by Charles (a mere stripling king, scarcely nineteen) turned his head. Never was there a more intoxicated hero. He turned his victorious army upon Poland, dethroned the king, invaded Saxony, and prepared to invade Russia with an army of eighty thousand troops. His cool adversary, who since his defeat

at Narva had been prosecuting his reforms and reorganizing his army and building a navy, was more of a wily statesman than a successful general. He retreated before Charles, avoided battles, tempted him in the pursuit to dreary and sparsely inhabited districts, decoyed him into provinces remote from his base of supplies; so that at the approach of winter Charles found himself in a cold and desolate country (as Napoleon was afterwards tempted to *his* ruin), with his army dwindled down to twenty-five thousand men, while Peter had one hundred thousand, with ample provisions and military stores. The generals of Charles now implore him to return to Sweden, at least to seek winter quarters in the Ukraine; but the monarch, infatuated, lays siege to Pultowa, and gives battle to Peter, and is not only defeated, but his forces are almost annihilated, so that he finds the greatest difficulty in escaping into Turkey with a handful of followers. That battle settled the fortunes of both Charles and Peter. The one was hopelessly ruined; the other was left free to take as much territory from Sweden as he wished, to open his sea-ports on the Baltic, and to dig canals from river to river.

But another enemy still remained, Turkey; who sought to recover her territory on the Black Sea, and who had already declared war. Flushed with conquest, Peter in his turn became rash. He advanced to the

Turkish territory with forty thousand men, and was led into the same trap which proved the ruin of Charles XII. He suddenly finds himself in a hostile country, beyond the Pruth, between an army of Turks and an army of Tartars, with a deep and rapid river in his rear. Two hundred thousand men attack his forty thousand. He cannot advance, he cannot retreat; he is threatened with annihilation. He is driven to despair. Neither he nor his generals can see any escape, for in three days he has lost twenty thousand men, — one half his army. In all probability he and his remaining men will be captured, and he conducted as a prisoner to Constantinople, and perhaps be shown to the mocking and jeering people in a cage, as Bajazet was. In this crisis he shuts himself up in his tent, and refuses to see anybody.

He is saved by a woman, and a great woman, even Catherine his wife, who originally was a poor peasant girl in Livonia, and who after various adventures became the wife of a young Swedish officer killed at the battle of Marienburg, and then the mistress of Prince Mentchikof, and then of Peter himself, who at length married her, —"an incident," says Voltaire, "which fortune and merit never before produced in the annals of the world." She suggested negotiation, when Peter was in the very jaws of destruction, and which nobody had thought of. She collects together her jewels and all the valuables she

can find, and sends them to the Turkish general as a present, and favorable terms are secured. But Peter loses Azof, and is shut out from the Black Sea, and is compelled to withdraw from the vicinity of the Danube. The Baltic is however still open to him; and in the mean time he has transferred his capital to a new city, which he built on the Gulf of Finland.

It was during his Swedish war, about the year 1702, when he had driven the Swedes from Ladoga and the Neva, that he fixed his eyes upon a miserable morass, a delta, half under water, formed by the dividing branches of the Neva, as the future seat of his vast empire. It was a poor site for a capital city, inaccessible by water half the year, without stones, without wood, without any building materials, with a barren soil, and liable to be submerged in a storm. Some would say it was an immense mistake to select such a place for the capital of an empire stretching even to the Pacific ocean. But it was the only place he could get which opened a water communication with Western Europe. He could not Europeanize his empire without some such location for his new capital. So St. Petersburg arose above the marshes of the Neva as if by magic, built in a year, on piles, although it cost him the lives of one hundred thousand men. "We never could look on this capital," says Motley, "with its imposing though monotonous architecture, its colossal squares, its vast

colonnades, its endless vistas, its spires and minarets sheathed in barbaric gold and flashing in the sun, and remember the magical rapidity with which it was built, without recalling Milton's description of Pandemonium: —

> "'As bees
> In spring time, when the sun with Taurus rides,
> Pour forth their populous youth about the hive
> In clusters: they among fresh dews and flowers
> Fly to and fro, or on the smoothed plank,
> The suburb of their straw-built citadel,
> Now rubbed with balm, expatiate, and confer
> Their state affairs: so thick the aery crowd
> Swarm'd and were straighten'd; till, the signal given,
> Behold a wonder!'

"The transfer of the seat of government, by the removal of the senate from Moscow, was effected a few years afterwards. Since that time, the repudiated Oriental capital of the ancient Czars, with her golden tiara and Eastern robe, has sat, like Hagar in the wilderness, deserted and lonely in all her barbarian beauty. Yet even now, in many a backward look and longing sigh, she reads plainly enough that she is not forgotten by her sovereign, that she is still at heart preferred, and that she will eventually triumph over her usurping and artificial rival."

So writes a great historian; but to me it seems that the longing eyes of the Emperor of Russia are not

turned to the old barbaric capital, but to a still more ancient capital, — that which Constantine, with far-seeing vision, selected as the central city of the decaying empire of the Romans, easily defended, resting on both Europe and Asia, with access to the Mediterranean and Black seas; the most magnificent site for the capital of a great empire on the face of the globe, which is needed by Russia if she is to preserve her maritime power, and which nothing but the jealousy of the Western nations has prevented her from twice seizing within a single generation. We say, "Westward, the star of empire takes its way." But an empire larger in its territories than all Europe, and constantly augmenting its resources, although still Cossack, still undeveloped, has its eye on Eastern, not Western extension, until China herself, with her four thousand years of civilization and her four hundred millions of people, may become a spoil to be divided between the Emperor of Russia and the Empress of India; not as banded and united robbers divide their spoil, but the one encroaching from the West and North, and the other from the West and South.

Peter, after having realized the great objects to which he early aspired, after having founded a navy and reorganized his army, and added provinces to his empire, and partially civilized it, and given to it a new capital, now meditated a second tour of Europe, this

time to be accompanied by his wife. Thirteen years had elapsed since he worked as a ship-carpenter in the dock-yards of Holland. He was now forty-three years old, still manly, vigorous, and inquiring. In 1715, just as Louis had completed his brilliant and yet unfortunate career, Peter first revisited the scene of his early labors, where he was enthusiastically received, and was afterwards entertained with great distinction at Paris. He continued his studies in art, in science, and laws, saw everything, and was particularly impressed with the tomb of Richelieu. "Great man!" apostrophizes the Czar, "I would give half of my kingdom to learn from thee how to govern the other half." Such remarks indicate that he knew something of history, and comprehended the mission of the great cardinal, — which was to establish absolutism as one of the needed forces of the seventeenth century; for it was Richelieu, hateful as is his character, who built up the French monarchy.

From Paris, Peter proceeded to Berlin, where he was received with equal attentions. He inspired universal respect, although his aspect was fierce, his habits rough, and his manners uncouth. The one thing which marked him as a great man was his force of character. He was undazzled and unseduced; plain, simple, temperate, self-possessed, and straightforward. He had not worked for himself, but for his country, and everybody knew it. His wife Catherine, also a great woman, did not make

so good an impression as he did, being fat, vulgar, and covered with jewels and orders and crosses. I suppose both of them were what we now should call "plain people." Station, power, and wealth seem to have very little effect on the manners and habits of those who have arisen by extraordinary talents to an exalted position. Nor does this position develop pride as much as is generally supposed. Pride is born in a man, and will appear if he is ever so lowly; as also vanity, the more amiable quality, which expends itself in hospitalities and ostentations. The proud Gladstone dresses like a Methodist minister, and does not seem to care what kind of a hat he wears. The vain Beaconsfield loved honors and stars and flatteries and aristocratic insignia: if he had been rich he would have been prodigal, and given great banquets. Peter made no display, and saved his money for useful purposes. It would seem that most of the Russian monarchs have retained simplicity in their private lives.

The closing years of Peter were saddened by a great tragedy, as were those of David. Both these monarchs had the misfortune to have rebellious and unworthy sons, who were heirs to the throne. Alexis was as great a trial to Peter as Absalom was to David. He was hostile to reforms, was in league with his father's enemies, and was hopelessly stupid and profligate. He was not vain, ambitious, and beautiful, like the son of

David; but coarse, in bondage to priests, fond of the society of the weak and dissipated, and utterly unfitted to rule an empire. Had he succeeded Peter, the life-work of Peter would have been wasted. His reign would have been as disastrous to Russia as that of Mary Queen of Scots would have been to England, had she succeeded Elizabeth. The patience of the father was at last exhausted. He had remonstrated and threatened to no purpose. The young man would not reform his habits, or abstain from dangerous intrigues. He got beastly drunk with convivial friends, and robbed and cheated his father whenever he got a chance.

What was Peter to do with such a rebellious, undutiful, profligate, silly youth as Alexis, — a sot, a bigot, and a liar? Should he leave to him the work of carrying out his policy and aims? It would be weakness and madness. It seemed to him that he had nothing to do but disinherit him. In so doing, he would render no injustice. Alexis had no claim to the throne, like the eldest son of Victoria. The throne belonged to Peter. He had no fetters on him like a feudal sovereign; he could elect whom he pleased to inherit his vast empire. It was not his son he loved best, but his country. He had the right to appoint any successor he pleased, and he would naturally select one who would carry out his plans and rule ably. So he dis-

inherited his eldest son Alexis, and did it in virtue of the power which he imagined he had received, like an old Jewish patriarch, from God Almighty. There was no law of Russia designating the eldest son as the Czar's successor. No one can reasonably blame Peter for disinheriting this worthless son, whom he had ceased to love, — whom he even despised.

Having disinherited him, out of regard to public interests more than personal dislike, the question arises, what shall he do with him? Shall he shut him in a state-prison, or confine him to a convent, or make way with him? One of these terrible alternatives he must take. What struggles of his soul to decide which were best! We pity a man compelled to make such a choice. Any choice was bad, and full of perils and calumnies. Whatever way he turned was full of obstacles. If he should shut him up, the priests and humiliated boyars and other intriguing rascals might make him emperor after Peter's death, and thus create a counter reformation, and upset the work of Peter's life. If he should make way with Alexis, the curses of his enemies and the execrations of Europe and posterity would follow him as an unnatural father. David, with his tender nature and deep affection, would have spared Absalom if all the hosts of Israel had fallen and his throne were overturned. But Peter was not so weak as David; he was stern and severe. He decided to bring his son to

trial for conspiracy and rebellion. The court found him guilty. The ministers, generals, and senators of the empire pronounced sentence of death upon him. Would the father have used his prerogative and pardoned him? That we can never know. Some think that Peter did not intend to execute the sentence. At any rate, he was mercifully delivered from his dilemma. Alexis, frightened and apparently contrite, was seized with a fit of apoplexy, and died imploring his father's pardon.

This tragedy is regarded as the great stain on the reign of Peter. It shocked the civilized world. I do not wish to exculpate Peter from cruelty or hard-heartedness; I would neither justify him nor condemn him. In this matter, I think, he is to be judged by the supreme tribunal of Heaven. I do not know enough to acquit or condemn him. All I know is, that his treatment of his son was both a misfortune and a stain on his memory. The people to decide this point are those rich fathers who have rebellious, prodigal, reckless, and worthless sons, hopelessly dissipated, and rendered imbecile by self-indulgence and wasteful revels; or those people who discuss the expediency and apparent state necessity for the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, when the welfare of a great kingdom was set against the ties of blood.

After the death of Alexis, a few more years are given to the Czar to follow out his improvements,

centralize his throne, and extend his territories both on the Baltic and in the East. The death of Charles XII. enabled him to take what Swedish provinces he needed to protect his mercantile interests, and to snatch from Persia the southern coast of the Caspian, — the original kingdom of Cyrus. "It is not land I want," said he, "but water." This is the key to all his conquests. He wanted an outlet to the sea, on both sides his empire. He did not aim at territorial enlargement so much as at facilities to enrich and civilize his empire.

Having done his work, — the work, I think, for which he was raised up, — he sets about the succession to his throne. Amid unprecedented pomp he celebrates the coronation of his faithful and devoted wife, to whom he also has been faithful. It is she only who understands and can carry out his imperial policy. He himself at Moscow, 1724, amid unusual solemnities, placed the imperial crown upon her brow, and proudly and yet humbly walked before her in the gorgeous procession as a captain of her guard. Before all the great dignitaries of his empire he gives the following reasons for his course: —

"The Empress Catherine, our dearest consort, was an important help to us in all our dangers, not in war alone, but in other expeditions in which she voluntarily accompanied us; serving us with her able counsel, notwithstanding the

natural weakness of her sex, more particularly at the battle of Pruth, when our army was reduced to twenty-two thousand men, while the Turks were two hundred thousand strong. It was in this desperate condition, above all others, that she signalized her zeal by a courage superior to her sex. For which reasons, and in virtue of that power which God has given us, we thus honor our spouse with the imperial crown."

Peter died in the following year, after a reign of more than forty years, bequeathing a centralized empire to his successors, a large and disciplined army, a respectable navy, and many improvements in agriculture, manufactures, commerce, and the arts, — yea, schools and universities for the education of the higher classes.

Whatever may have been the faults of Peter, history cannot accuse him of ingratitude, or insincerity, or weak affections, — nothing of which is seen in his treatment of the honest Dutchman, in whose yard he worked as a common laborer; of Lefort, whom he made admiral of his fleet; or of Mentchikof, whom he elevated to the second place in his empire. Peter was not a great warrior, but he created armies. He had traits in common with barbarians, but he bequeathed a new civilization, and dispelled the night of hereditary darkness. He owed nothing to art; he looms up as a prodigy of Nature. He cared nothing for public opinion; he left the moral influence of a

great example. He began with no particular aim except to join his country to the sea; he bequeathed a policy of indefinite expansion. He did not leave free institutions, for his country was not prepared for them; but he animated thirty millions with an intense and religious loyalty. He did not emancipate serfs; but he bequeathed a power which enabled his successors to loosen fetters with safety. He degraded nobles; but his nobles would have prevented if they could the emancipation of the people. He may have wasted his energies in condescending to mean details, and insisting on doing everything with his own hands, from drummer to general, and cabin-boy to admiral, winning battles with his own sword, and singing in the choir as head of the Church; but in so doing he made the mistake of Charlemagne, whom he strikingly resembles in his iron will, his herculean energies, and his enlightened mind. He could not convert his subjects from cattle into men, even had he wished, for civilization is a long and tedious process; but he made them the subjects of a great empire, destined to spread from sea to sea. Certainly he was in advance of his people; he broke away from the ideas which enslaved them. He may have been despotic, and inexorable, and hard-hearted; but that was just such a man as his country needed for a ruler. Mr. Motley likens him to "a huge engine, placed upon the

earth to effect a certain task, working its mighty arms night and day with ceaseless and untiring energy, crashing through all obstacles, and annihilating everything in its path with the unfeeling precision of gigantic mechanism." I should say he was an instrument of Almighty power to bring good out of evil, and prepare the way for a civilization the higher elements of which he did not understand, and with which he would not probably have sympathized.

Who shall say, as we survey his mighty labors, and the indomitable energy and genius which inspired them, that he does not deserve the title which civilization has accorded to him, — yea, a higher title than that of Great, even that of Father of his country?

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XLIII.

FREDERIC THE GREAT.

THE PRUSSIAN POWER.

A. D. 1712–1786.

XLIII.

FREDERIC THE GREAT.

THE PRUSSIAN POWER.

THE history of Frederic the Great is simply that of a man who committed an outrageous crime, the consequences of which pursued him in the maledictions and hostilities of Europe, and who fought bravely and heroically to rescue himself and country from the ruin which impended over him as a consequence of this crime. His heroism, his fertility of resources, his unflagging energy, and his amazing genius in overcoming difficulties won for him the admiration of that class who idolize strength and success; so that he stands out in history as a struggling gladiator who baffled all his foes, — not a dying gladiator on the arena of a pagan amphitheatre, but more like a Judas Maccabeus, when hunted by the Syrian hosts, rising victorious, and laying the foundation of a powerful monarchy; indeed, his fame spread, irrespective of his cause and character, from one end of Christendom to the other, — not such a fame as endeared Gustavus Adolphus to the heart of

nations for heroic efforts to save the Protestant religion, — but such a fame as the successful generals of ancient Rome won by adding territories to a warlike State, regardless of all the principles of right and wrong. Such a career is suggestive of grand moral lessons; and it is to teach these lessons that I describe a character for whom I confess I feel but little sympathy, yet whom I am compelled to respect for his heroic qualities and great abilities.

Frederic of Prussia was born in 1712, and had an unhappy childhood and youth from the caprices of a royal but disagreeable father, best known for his tall regiment of guards; a severe, austere, prejudiced, formal, narrow, and hypochondriacal old Pharisee, whose sole redeeming excellence was an avowed belief in God Almighty and in the orthodox doctrines of the Protestant Church.

In 1740, this rigid, exacting, unsympathetic king died; and his son Frederic, who had been subjected to the severest discipline, restraints, annoyances, and humiliations, ascended the throne, and became the third King of Prussia, at the age of twenty-eight. His kingdom was a small one, being then about one quarter of its present size.

And here we pause for a moment to give a glance at the age in which he lived, — an age of great reactions, when the stirring themes and issues of the seventeenth

century were substituted for mockeries, levities, and infidelities; when no fierce protests were made except those of Voltaire against the Jesuits; when an abandoned woman ruled France, as the mistress of an enervated monarch; when Spain and Italy were sunk in lethargic forgetfulness, Austria was priest-ridden, and England was governed by a ring of selfish landed proprietors; when there was no marked enterprise but the slave-trade; when no department of literature or science was adorned by original genius; and when England had no broader statesman than Walpole, no abler churchman than Warburton, no greater poet than Pope. There was a general indifference to lofty speculation. A materialistic philosophy was in fashion,— not openly atheistic, but arrogant and pretentious, whose only power was in sarcasm and mockery, like the satires of Lucian, extinguishing faith, godless and yet boastful, — an Epicureanism such as Socrates attacked and Paul rebuked. It found its greatest exponent in Voltaire, the oracle and idol of intellectual Europe. In short, it was an age when general cynicism and reckless abandonment to pleasure marked the upper-classes; an age which produced Chesterfield, as godless a man as Voltaire himself.

In this period of religious infidelity, moral torpor, fashionable mediocrity, unthinking pleasure-seeking, and royal orgies; when the people were spurned, in-

sulted and burdened, — Frederic ascends an absolute throne. He is a young and fashionable philosopher. He professes to believe in nothing that ages of inquiry and study are supposed to have settled; he even ridicules the religious principles of his father. He ardently adopts everything which claims to be a novelty, but is not learned enough to know that what he supposes to be new has been exploded over and over again. He is liberal and tolerant, but does not see the logical sequence of the very opinions he indorses. He is also what is called an accomplished man, since he can play on an instrument, and amuse a dinner-party by jokes and stories. He builds a magnificent theatre, and collects statues, pictures, snuff-boxes, and old china. He welcomes to his court, not stern thinkers, but sneering and amusing philosophers. He employs in his service both Catholics and Protestants alike, since he holds in contempt the religion of both. He is free from animosities and friendships, and neither punishes those who are his enemies nor rewards those who are his friends. He apes reform, but shackles the press; he appoints able men in his service, but only those who will be his unscrupulous tools. He has a fine physique, and therefore is unceasingly active. He flies from one part of his kingdom to another, not to examine morals or education or the state of the people, but to inspect fortresses and to collect camps.

To such a man the development of the resources of his kingdom, the reform of abuses, and educational projects are of secondary importance; he gives his primary attention to raising and equipping armies, having in view the extension of his kingdom by aggressive and unjustifiable wars. He cares little for domestic joys or the society of women, and is incapable of sincere friendship. He has no true admiration for intellectual excellence, although he patronizes literary lions. He is incapable of any sacrifice except for his troops, who worship him, since their interests are identical with his own. In the camp or in the field he spends his time, amusing himself occasionally with the society of philosophers as cynical as himself. He has dreams and visions of military glory, which to him is the highest and greatest on this earth, Charles XII. being his model of a hero.

With such views he enters upon a memorable career. His first important public act as king is the seizure of part of the territory of the Bishop of Liège, which he claims as belonging to Prussia. The old bishop is indignant and amazed, but is obliged to submit to a robbery which disgusts Christendom, but is not of sufficient consequence to set it in a blaze.

The next thing he does, of historical importance, is to seize Silesia, a province which belongs to Austria, and contains about twenty thousand square miles, — a fertile and beautiful province, nearly as large as his

own kingdom; it is the highest table-land of Germany, girt around with mountains, hard to attack and easy to defend. So rapid and secret are his movements, that this unsuspecting and undefended country is overrun by his veteran soldiers as easily as Louis XIV. overran Flanders and Holland, and with no better excuse than the French king had. This outrage was an open insult to Europe, as well as a great wrong to Maria Theresa, — supposed by him to be a feeble woman who could not resent the injury. But in this woman he found the great enemy of his life, — a lioness deprived of her whelps, whose wailing was so piteous and so savage that she aroused Europe from lethargy, and made coalitions which shook it to its centre. At first she simply rallied her own troops, and fought single-handed to recover her lost and most valued province. But Frederic, with marvellous celerity and ability, got possession of the Silesian fortresses; the bloody battle of Mollwitz (1741) secured his prey, and he returned in triumph to his capital, to abide the issue of events.

It is not easy to determine whether this atrocious crime, which astonished Europe, was the result of his early passion for military glory, or the inauguration of a policy of aggression and aggrandizement. But it was the signal of an explosion of European politics which ended in one of the most bloody wars of modern

times. "It was," says Carlyle, "the little stone broken loose from the mountain, hitting others, big and little, which again hit others with their leaping and rolling, till the whole mountain-side was in motion under law of gravity."

Maria Theresa appeals to her Hungarian nobles, with her infant in her arms, at a diet of the nation, and sends her envoys to every friendly court. She offers her unscrupulous enemy the Duchy of Limberg and two hundred thousand pounds to relinquish his grasp on Silesia. It is like the offer of Darius to Alexander, and is spurned by the Prussian robber. It is not Limberg he wants, nor money, but Silesia, which he resolves to keep because he wants it, and at any hazard, even were he to jeopardize his own hereditary dominions. The peace of Breslau gives him a temporary leisure, and he takes the waters of Aachen, and discusses philosophy. He is uneasy, but jubilant, for he has nearly doubled the territory and population of Prussia. His subjects proclaim him a hero, with immense pæans. Doubtless, too, he now desires peace, — just as Louis XIV. did after he had conquered Holland, and as Napoleon did when he had seated his brothers on the old thrones of Europe.

But there can be no lasting peace after such outrageous wickedness. The angered kings and princes of Europe are to become the instruments of eternal

justice. They listen to the eloquent cries of the Austrian Empress, and prepare for war, to punish the audacious robber who disturbs the peace of the world and insults all other nationalities. But they are not yet ready for effective war; the storm does not at once break out.

The Austrians however will not wait, and the second Silesian war ensues, in which Saxony joins Austria. Again is Frederic successful, over the combined forces of these two powers, and he retains his stolen province. He is now regarded as a world-hero, for he has fought bravely against vastly superior forces, and is received in Berlin with unbounded enthusiasm. He renews his studies in philosophy, courts literary celebrities, reorganizes his army, and collects forces for a renewed encounter, which he foresees.

He has ten years of repose and preparation, during which he is lauded and flattered, yet retaining simplicity of habits, sleeping but five hours a day, finding time for state dinners, flute-playing, and operas, of all which he is fond; for he was doubtless a man of culture, social, well read if not profound, witty, inquiring, and without any striking defects save tyranny, ambition, parsimony, dissimulation, and lying.

It was during those ten years of rest and military preparation that Voltaire made his memorable visit — his third and last — to Pottsdam and Berlin, thirty-two

months of alternate triumph and humiliation. No literary man ever had so successful and brilliant a career as this fortunate and lauded Frenchman, — the oracle of all salons, the arbiter of literary fashions, a dictator in the realm of letters, with amazing fecundity of genius directed into all fields of labor; poet, historian, dramatist, and philosopher; writing books enough to load a cart, and all of them admired and extolled, all of them scattered over Europe, read by all nations; a marvellous worker, of unbounded wit and unexampled popularity, whose greatest literary merit was in the transcendent excellence of his style, for which chiefly he is immortal; a great artist, rather than an original and profound genius whose ideas form the basis of civilizations. The King of Prussia formed an ardent friendship for this king of letters, based on admiration rather than respect; invited him to his court, extolled and honored him, and lavished on him all that he could bestow, outside of political distinction. But no worldly friendship could stand such a test as both were subjected to, since they at last comprehended each other's character and designs. Voltaire perceived the tyranny, the ambition, the heartlessness, the egotism, and the exactions of his royal patron, and despised him while he flattered him; and Frederic on his part saw the hollowness, the meanness, the suspicion, the irritability, the pride, the insincerity, the tricks, the

ingratitude, the baseness, the lies of his distinguished guest, — and their friendship ended in utter vanity. What friendship can last without mutual respect? The friendship of Frederic and Voltaire was hopelessly broken, in spite of the remembrance of mutual admiration and happy hours. It was patched up and mended like a broken vase, but it could not be restored. How sad, how mournful, how humiliating is a broken friendship or an alienated love! It is the falling away of the foundations of the soul, the disappearance forever of what is most to be prized on earth, — its celestial certitudes. A beloved friend may die, but we are consoled in view of the fact that the friendship may be continued in heaven: the friend is not lost to us. But when a friendship or a love is broken, there is no continuance of it through eternity. It is the gloomiest thing to think of in this whole world.

But Frederic was too busy and pre-occupied a man to mourn long for a departed joy. He was absorbed in preparations for war. The sword of Damocles was suspended over his head, and he knew it better than any other man in Europe; he knew it from his spies and emissaries. Though he had enjoyed ten years' peace, he knew that peace was only a truce; that the nations were arming in behalf of the injured empress; that so great a crime as the seizure of Silesia must be visited with a penalty; that there was no escape for

him except in a tremendous life-and-death struggle, which was to be the trial of his life; that defeat was more than probable, since the forces in preparation against him were overwhelming. The curses of the civilized world still pursued him, and in his retreat at Sans Souci he had no rest; and hence he became irritable and suspicious. The clouds of the political atmosphere were filled with thunderbolts, ready to fall upon him and crush him at any moment; indeed, nothing could arrest the long-gathering storm.

It broke out with unprecedented fury in the spring of 1756. Austria, Russia, Sweden, Saxony, and France were combined to ruin him, — the most powerful coalition of the European powers seen since the Thirty Years' War. His only ally was England, — an ally not so much to succor him as to humble France, and hence her aid was timid and incompetent.

Thus began the famous Seven Years' War, during which France lost her colonial possessions, and was signally humiliated at home, — a war which developed the genius of the elder Pitt, and placed England in the proud position of mistress of the ocean; a war marked by the largest array of forces which Europe had seen since the times of Charles V., in which six hundred thousand men were marshalled under different leaders and nations, to crush a man who had insulted Europe and defied the law of nations and the laws of God. The

coalition represented one hundred millions of people with inexhaustible resources.

Now, it was the memorable resistance of Frederic II. to this vast array of forces, and his successful retention of the province he had seized, which gave him his chief claim as a hero; and it was his patience, his fortitude, his energy, his fertility of resources, and the enthusiasm with which he inspired his troops even after the most discouraging and demoralizing defeats, that won for him that universal admiration as a man which he lived to secure in spite of all his defects and crimes. We admire the resources and dexterity of an outlawed bandit, but we should remember he is a bandit still; and we confound all the laws which hold society together, when we cover up the iniquity of a great crime by the successes which have apparently baffled justice. Frederic II., by stealing Silesia, and thus provoking a great war of untold and indescribable miseries, is entitled to anything but admiration, whatever may have been his military genius; and I am amazed that so great a man as Carlyle, with all his hatred of shams, and his clear perceptions of justice and truth, should have whitewashed such a robber. I cannot conceive how the severest critic of the age should have spent the best years of his life in apologies for so bad a man, if his own philosophy had not become radically unsound, based on the abominable doctrine that the end justifies

the means, and that an outward success is the test of right. Far different was Carlyle's treatment of Cromwell. Frederic had no such cause as Cromwell; it was simply his own or his country's aggrandizement by any means, or by any sword he could lay hold of. The chief merit of Carlyle's history is his impartiality and accuracy in describing the details of the contest: the cause of the contest he does not sufficiently reprobate; and all his sympathies seem to be with the unscrupulous robber who fights heroically, rather than with indignant Europe outraged by his crimes. But we cannot separate crime from its consequences; and all the reverses, the sorrows, the perils, the hardships, the humiliations, the immense losses, the dreadful calamities through which Prussia had to pass, which wrung even the heart of Frederic with anguish, were only a merited retribution. The Seven Years' War was a king-hunt, in which all the forces of the surrounding monarchies gathered around the doomed man, making his circle smaller and smaller, and which would certainly have ended in his utter ruin, had he not been rescued by events as unexpected as they were unparalleled. Had some great and powerful foe been converted suddenly into a friend at a critical moment, Napoleon, another unscrupulous robber, might not have been defeated at Waterloo, or died on a rock in the ocean. But Providence, it would seem, who rules the fate of war, had some inscrutable reason

for the rescue of Prussia under Frederic, and the humiliation of France under Napoleon.

The brunt of the war fell of course upon Austria, so that, as the two nations were equally German, it had many of the melancholy aspects of a civil war. But Austria was Catholic and Prussia was Protestant; and had Austria succeeded, Germany possibly to-day would have been united under an irresistible Catholic imperialism, and there would have been no German empire whose capital is Berlin. The Austrians, in this contest, fought bravely and ably, under Prince Carl and Marshal Daun, who were no mean competitors with the King of Prussia for military laurels. But the Austrians fought on the offensive, and the Prussians on the defensive. The former were obliged to manœuvre on the circumference, the latter in the centre of the circle. The Austrians, in order to recover Silesia, were compelled to cross high mountains whose passes were guarded by Prussian soldiers. The war began in offensive operations, and ended in defensive.

The most terrible enemy that Frederic had, next to Austria, was Russia, ruled then by Elizabeth, who had the deepest sympathy with Maria Theresa; but when she died, affairs took a new turn. Frederic was then on the very verge of ruin, — was, as they say, about to be "bagged," — when the new Emperor of Russia conceived a great personal admiration for his genius and

heroism; the Russian enmity was converted to friendship, and the Czar became an ally instead of a foe.

The aid which the Saxons gave to Maria Theresa availed but little. The population, chiefly and traditionally Protestant, probably sympathized with Prussia more than with Austria, although the King himself was Catholic, — that inglorious monarch who resembled in his gallantries Louis XV., and in his dilettante tastes Leo X. He is chiefly known for the number of his concubines and his Dresden gallery of pictures.

The aid which the French gave was really imposing, so far as numbers make efficient armies. But the French were not the warlike people in the reign of Louis XV. that they were under Henry IV., or Napoleon Bonaparte. They fought, without the stimulus of national enthusiasm, without a cause, as part of a great machine. They never have been successful in war without the inspiration of a beloved cause. This war had no especial attraction or motive for them. What was it to Frenchmen, so absorbed with themselves, whether a Hohenzollern or a Hapsburg reigned in Germany? Hence, the great armies which the government of France sent to the aid of Maria Theresa were without spirit, and were not even marshalled by able generals. In fact, the French seemed more intent on crippling England than in crushing Frederic. The war

had immense complications. Though France and England were drawn into it, yet both France and England fought more against each other than for the parties who had summoned them to their rescue.

England was Frederic's ally, but her aid was not great directly. She did not furnish him with many troops; she sent subsidies instead, which enabled him to continue the contest. But these were not as great as he expected, or had reason to expect. With all the money he received from Walpole or Pitt he was reduced to the most desperate straits.

One thing was remarkable in that long war of seven years, which strained every nerve and taxed every energy of Prussia: it was carried on by Frederic in hard cash. He did not run in debt; he always had enough on hand in coin to pay for all expenses. But then his subjects were most severely taxed, and the soldiers were poorly paid. If the same economy he used in that war of seven years had been exercised by our Government in its late war, we should not have had any national debt at all at the close of the war, although we probably should have suspended specie payments.

It would not be easy or interesting to attempt to compress the details of a long war of seven years in a single lecture. The records of war have great uniformity, — devastation, taxes, suffering, loss of life and

of property (except by the speculators and government agents), the flight of literature, general demoralization, the lowering of the tone of moral feeling, the ascendency of unscrupulous men, the exaltation of military talents, general grief at the loss of friends, fiendish exultation over victories alternated with depressing despondency in view of defeats, the impoverishment of a nation on the whole, and the sickening conviction, which fastens on the mind after the first excitement is over, of a great waste of life and property for which there is no return, and which sometimes a whole generation cannot restore. Nothing is so dearly purchased as the laurels of the battle-field; nothing is so great a delusion and folly as military glory to the eye of a Christian or philosopher. It is purchased by the tears and blood of millions, and is rebuked by all that is grand in human progress. Only degraded and demoralized peoples can ever rejoice in war; and when it is not undertaken for a great necessity, it fills the world with bitter imprecations. It is cruel and hard and unjust in its nature, and utterly antagonistic to civilization. Its greater evils are indeed overruled; Satan is ever rebuked and baffled by a benevolent Providence. But war is always a curse and a calamity in its immediate results, — and in its ultimate results also, unless waged in defence of some immortal cause.

It must be confessed, war is terribly exciting. The

eyes of the civilized world were concentrated on Frederic II. during this memorable period; and most people anticipated his overthrow. They read everywhere of his marchings and counter-marchings, his sieges and battles, his hair-breadth escapes, and his renewed exertions, from the occupation of Saxony to the battle of Torgau. In this war he was sometimes beaten, as at Kolin; but he gained three memorable victories, — one over the French, at Rossbach; the second, over the Austrians, at Luthen; and the third, over the Russians, at Zorndorf, the most bloody of all his battles. And he gained these victories by outflanking, his attack being the form of a wedge, — learned by the example of Epaminondas, — a device which led to new tactics, and proclaimed Frederic a master of the art of war. But in these battles he simply showed himself to be a great general. It was not until his reverses came that he showed himself a great man, or earned the sympathy which Europe felt for a humiliated monarch, putting forth herculean energies to save his crown and kingdom. His easy and great victories in the first year of the war simply saved him from annihilation; they were not great enough to secure peace. Although thus far he was a conqueror, he had no peace, no rest, and but little hope. His enemies were so numerous and powerful that they could send large reinforcements: he could draw but few. In time it was apparent that he would

be destroyed, whatever his skill and bravery. Had not the Empress Elizabeth died, he would have been conquered and prostrated. After his defeat at Hochkirch, he was obliged to dispute his ground inch by inch, compelled to hide his grief from his soldiers, financially straitened and utterly forlorn; but for a timely subsidy from England he would have been desperate. The fatal battle of Kunnersdorf, in his fourth campaign, when he lost twenty thousand men, almost drove him to despair; and evil fortune continued to pursue him in his fifth campaign, in which he lost some of his strongest fortresses, and Silesia was opened to his enemies. At one time he had only six days' provisions: the world marvelled how he held out. Then England deserted him. He made incredible exertions to avert his doom: everlasting marches, incessant perils; no comforts or luxuries as a king, only sorrows, privations, sufferings; enduring more labors than his soldiers; with restless anxieties and blasted hopes. In his despair and humiliation it is said he recognized God Almighty. In his chastisements and misfortunes, — apparently on the very brink of destruction, and with the piercing cries of misery which reached his ears from every corner of his dominions, — he must, at least, have recognized a Retribution. Still his indomitable will remained. His pride and his self-reliance never deserted him; he would have died rather than have yielded up Silesia until

wrested from him. At last the battle of Torgau, fought in the night, and the death of the Empress of Russia, removed the overhanging clouds, and he was enabled to contend with Austria unassisted by France and Russia. But if Maria Theresa could not recover Silesia, aided by the great monarchies of Europe, what could she do without their aid? So peace came at last, when all parties were wearied and exhausted; and Frederic retained his stolen province at the sacrifice of one hundred and eighty thousand men, and the decline of one tenth of the whole population of his kingdom and its complete impoverishment, from which it did not recover for nearly one hundred years. Prussia, though a powerful military state, became and remained one of the poorest countries of Europe; and I can remember when it was rare to see there, except in the houses of the rich, either a silver fork or a silver spoon; to say nothing of the cheap and frugal fare of the great mass of the people, and their comfortless kind of life, with hardly any physical luxuries except tobacco and beer. It is surprising how, in a poor country, Frederic could have sustained such an exhaustive war without incurring a national debt. Perhaps it was not as easy in those times for kings and states to run into debt as it is now. One of the great refinements of advancing civilization is that we are permitted to bequeath our burdens to future generations. Time only will

show whether this is the wisest course. It is certainly not a wise thing for individuals to do. He who enters on the possession of a heavily mortgaged estate is an embarrassed, perhaps impoverished, man. Frederic, at least, did not leave debts for posterity to pay; he preferred to pay as he went along, whatever were the difficulties.

The real gainer by the war, if gainer there was, was England, since she was enabled to establish a maritime supremacy, and develop her manufacturing and mercantile resources, — much needed in her future struggles to resist Napoleon. She also gained colonial possessions, a foothold in India, and the possession of Canada. This war entangled Europe, and led to great battles, not in Germany merely, but around the world. It was during this war, when France and England were antagonistic forces, that the military genius of Washington was first developed in America. The victories of Clive and Hastings soon after followed in India.

The greatest loser in this war was France: she lost provinces and military prestige. The war brought to light the decrepitude of the Bourbon rule. The marshals of France, with superior forces, were disgracefully defeated. The war plunged France in debt, only to be paid by a "roaring conflagration of anarchies." The logical sequence of the war was in those discontents and taxes which prepared the way for the French

Revolution, — a catastrophe or a new birth, as men differently view it.

The effect of the war on Austria was a loss of prestige, the beginning of the dismemberment of the empire, and the revelation of internal weakness. Though Maria Theresa gained general sympathy, and won great glory by her vigorous government and the heroism of her troops, she was a great loser. Besides the loss of men and money, Austria ceased to be the great threatening power of Europe. From this war England, until the close of the career of Napoleon, was really the most powerful state in Europe, and became the proudest.

As for Prussia, — the principal transgressor and actor, — it is more difficult to see the actual results. The immediate effects of the war were national impoverishment, an immense loss of life, and a fearful demoralization. The limits of the kingdom were enlarged, and its military and political power was established. It became one of the leading states of Continental Europe, surpassed only by Austria, Russia, and France. It led to great standing armies and a desire of aggrandizement. It made the army the centre of all power and the basis of social prestige. It made Frederic II. the great military hero of that age, and perpetuated his policy in Prussia. Bismarck is the sequel and sequence of Frederic. It was by aggressive and unscrupulous wars that the Romans were aggrandized, and it was also

by the habits and tastes which successful war created that Rome was ultimately undermined. The Roman empire did not last like the Chinese empire, although at one period it had more glory and prestige. So war both strengthens and impoverishes nations. But I believe that the violation of eternal principles of right ultimately brings a fearful penalty. It may be long delayed, but it will finally come, as in the sequel of the wicked wars of Louis XIV. and Napoleon Bonaparte. Victor Hugo, in his "History of a Great Crime," on the principle of everlasting justice, forewarned "Napoleon the Little" of his future reverses, while nations and kingdoms, in view of his marvellous successes, hailed him as a friend of civilization; and Hugo lived to see the fulfilment of his prophecy. Moreover, it may be urged that the Prussian people, — ground down by an absolute military despotism, the mere tools of an ambitious king, — were not responsible for the atrocious conquests of Frederic II. The misrule of monarchs does not bring permanent degradation on a nation, unless it shares the crimes of its monarch, — as in the case of the Romans, when the leading idea of the people was military conquest, from the very commencement of their state. The Prussians in the time of Frederic were a sincere, patriotic, and religious people. They were simply enslaved, and suffered the poverty and misery which were entailed by war.

After Frederic had escaped the perils of the Seven Years' War, it is surprising he should so soon have become a party to another atrocious crime, — the division and dismemberment of Poland. But here both Russia and Austria were also participants.

"Sarmatia fell, unwept, without a crime."

And I am still more amazed that Carlyle should cover up this crime with his sophistries. No man in ordinary life would be justified in seizing his neighbor's property because he was weak and his property was mismanaged. We might as well justify Russia in attempting to seize Turkey, although such a crime may be overruled in the future good of Europe. But Carlyle is an Englishman; and the English seized and conquered India because they wanted it, not because they had a right to it. The same laws which bind individuals also binds kings and nations. Free nations from the obligations which bind individuals, and the world would be an anarchy. Grant that Poland was not fit for self-government, this does not justify its political annihilation. The heart of the world exclaimed against that crime at the time, and the injuries of that unfortunate state are not yet forgotten. Carlyle says the "partition of Poland was an operation of Almighty Providence and the eternal laws of Nature," — a key to his whole philosophy, which means,

if it means anything, that as great fishes swallow up the small ones, and wild beasts prey upon each other, and eagles and vultures devour other birds, it is all right for powerful nations to absorb the weak ones, as the Romans did. Might does not make right by the eternal decrees of God Almighty, written in the Bible and on the consciences of mankind. Politicians, whose primal law is expediency, may justify such acts as public robbery, for they are political Jesuits, — always were, always will be; and even calm statesmen, looking on the overruling of events, may palliate; but to enlightened Christians there is only one law, "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you." Nor can Christian civilization reach an exalted plane until it is in harmony with the eternal laws of God. Mr. Carlyle glibly speaks of Almighty Providence favoring robbery; here he utters a falsehood, and I do not hesitate to say it, great as is his authority. God says, "Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not covet anything which is thy neighbor's, . . . for he is a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation." We must set aside the whole authority of divine revelation, to justify any crime openly or secretly committed. The prosperity of nations, in the long run, is based on righteousness; not on injustice, cruelty, and selfishness.

It cannot be denied that Frederic well managed his stolen property. He was a man of ability, of enlightened views, of indefatigable industry, and of an iron will. I would as soon deny that Cromwell did not well govern the kingdom which he had seized, on the plea of revolutionary necessity and the welfare of England, for he also was able and wise. But what was the fruit of Cromwell's well-intended usurpation? — a hideous reaction, the return of the Stuarts, the dissipation of his visionary dreams. And if the states which Frederic seized, and the empire he had founded in blood and carnage had been as well prepared for liberty as England was, the consequences of his ambition might have been far different.

But Frederic did not so much aim at the development of national resources, — the aim of all immortal statesmen, — as at the growth and establishment of a military power. He filled his kingdom and provinces with fortresses and camps and standing armies. He cemented a military monarchy. As a wise executive ruler, the King of Prussia enforced law and order, was economical in his expenditures, and kept up a rigid discipline; even rewarded merit, and was friendly to learning. And he showed many interesting personal qualities, — for I do not wish to make him out a monster, only as a great man who did wicked things, and things which even cemented for the time the power

of Prussia. He was frugal and unostentatious. Like Charlemagne, he associated with learned men. He loved music and literature; and he showed an amazing fortitude and patience in adversity, which called out universal admiration. He had a great insight into shams, was rarely imposed upon, and was scrupulous and honest in his dealings as an individual. He was also a fascinating man when he unbent; was affable, intelligent, accessible, and unstilted. He was an admirable talker, and a tolerable author. He always sympathized with intellectual excellence. He surrounded himself with great men in all departments. He had good taste and a severe dignity, and despised vulgar people; had no craving for fast horses, and held no intercourse with hostlers and gamblers, even if these gamblers had the respectable name of brokers. He punished all public thieves; so that his administration at least was dignified and respectable, and secured the respect of Europe and the admiration of men of ability. The great warrior was also a great statesman, and never made himself ridiculous, never degraded his position and powers, and could admire and detect a man of genius, even when hidden from the world. He was a Tiberius, but not a Nero fiddling over national calamities, and surrounding himself with stage-players, buffoons, and idiots.

But here his virtues ended. He was cold, selfish,

dissembling, hard-hearted, ungrateful, ambitious, unscrupulous, without faith in either God or man; so sceptical in religion that he was almost an atheist. He was a disobedient son, a heartless husband, a capricious friend, and a selfish self-idolater. While he was the friend of literary men, he patronized those who were infidel in their creed. He was not a religious persecutor, because he regarded all religions as equally false and equally useful. He was social among convivial and learned friends, but cared little for women or female society. His latter years, though dignified and quiet, an idol in all military circles, with an immense fame, and surrounded with every pleasure and luxury at Sans-Souci, were still sad and gloomy, like those of most great men whose leading principle of life was vanity and egotism, — like those of Solomon, Charles V., and Louis XIV. He heard the distant rumblings, if he did not live to see the lurid fires, of the French Revolution. He had been deceived in Voltaire, but he could not mistake the logical sequence of the ideas of Rousseau, — those blasting ideas which would sweep away all feudal institutions and all irresponsible tyrannies. When Mirabeau visited him he was a quaking, suspicious, irritable, capricious, unhappy old man, though adored by his soldiers to the last, — for those were the only people he ever loved, those who were willing to die for him, those who built up

his throne : and when he died, I suppose he was sincerely lamented by his army and his generals and his nobility, for with him began the greatness of Prussia as a military power. So far as a life devoted to the military and political aggrandizement of a country makes a man a patriot, Frederic the Great will receive the plaudits of those men who worship success, and who forget the enormity of unscrupulous crimes in the outward glory which immediately resulted, — yea, possibly of contemplative statesmen who see in the rise of a new power an instrument of the Almighty for some inscrutable end. To me his character and deeds have no fascination, any more than the fortunate career of some one of our modern millionnaires would have to one who took no interest in finance. It was doubtless grateful to the dying King of Prussia to hear the plaudits of his idolaters, as he stood on the hither shores of eternity; but his view of the spectators as they lined those shores must have been soon lost sight of, and their cheering and triumphant voices unheard and disregarded, as the bark, in which he sailed alone, put forth on the unknown ocean, to meet the Eternal Judge of the living and the dead.

We leave now the man who won so great a fame, to consider briefly his influence. In two respects, it seems to me, it has been decided and impressive.

In the first place, he gave an impulse to rationalistic inquiries in Germany; and many there are who think this was a good thing. He made it fashionable to be cynical and doubtful. Being ashamed of his own language, and preferring the French, he encouraged the current and popular French literature, which in his day, under the guidance of Voltaire, was materialistic and deistical. He embraced a philosophy which looked to secondary rather than primal causes, which scouted any revelations that could not be explained by reason, or reconciled with scientific theories, — that false philosophy which intoxicated Franklin and Jefferson as well as Hume and Gibbon, and which finally culminated in Diderot and D'Alembert; the philosophy which became fashionable in German universities, and whose nearest approach was that of the exploded Epicureanism of the Ancients. Under the patronage of the infidel court, the universities of Germany became filled with rationalistic professors, and the pulpits with dead and formal divines; so that the glorious old Lutheranism of Prussia became the coldest and most lifeless of all the forms which Protestantism ever assumed. Doubtless, great critics and scholars arose under the stimulus of that unbounded religious speculation which the King encouraged; but they employed their learning in pulling down rather than supporting the pillars of the ancient orthodoxy. And so rapidly did rationalism

spread in Northern Germany, that it changed its great lights into *illuminati*, who spurned what was revealed unless it was in accordance with their speculations and sweeping criticism. I need not dwell on this undisguised and blazing fact, on the rationalism which became the fashion in Germany, and which spread so disastrously over other countries, penetrating even into the inmost sanctuaries of theological instruction. All this may be progress; but to my mind it tended to extinguish the light of faith, and fill the seats of learning with cynics and unbelieving critics. It was bad enough to destroy the bodies of men in a heartless war; it was worse to nourish those principles which poisoned the soul, and spread doubt and disguised infidelities among the learned classes.

But the influence of Frederic was seen in a more marked manner in the inauguration of a national policy directed chiefly to military aggrandizement. If there ever was a purely military monarchy, it is Prussia; and this kingdom has been to Europe what Sparta was to Greece. All the successors of Frederic have followed out his policy with singular tenacity. All their habits and associations have been military. The army has been the centre of their pride, ambition, and hope. They have made their country one vast military camp. They have exempted no classes from military services; they have honored and exalted the army more than

any other interest. The principal people of the land are generals. The resources of the kingdom are expended in standing armies; and these are a perpetual menace. A network of military machinery controls all other pursuits and interests. The peasant is a military slave. The student of the university can be summoned to a military camp. Precedence in rank is given to military men over merchant princes, over learned professors, over distinguished jurists. The genius of the nation has been directed to the perfection of military discipline and military weapons. The government is always prepared for war, and has been rarely averse to it. It has ever been ready to seize a province or pick a quarrel. The late war with France was as much the fault of Prussia as of the government of Napoleon. The great idea of Prussia is military aggrandizement; it is no longer a small kingdom, but a great empire, more powerful than either Austria or France. It believes in new annexations, until all Germany shall be united under a Prussian Kaiser. What Rome became, Prussia aspires to be. The spirit, the animus, of Prussia is military power. Travel in that kingdom, — everywhere are soldiers, military schools, camps, arsenals, fortresses, reviews. And this military spirit, evident during the last hundred years, has made the military classes arrogant, austere, mechanical, contemptuous. This spirit pervades the nation. It despises

other nations as much as France did in the last century, or England after the wars of Napoleon.

But the great peculiarity of this military spirit is seen in the large standing armies, which dry up the resources of the nation and make war a perpetual necessity, at least a perpetual fear. It may be urged that these armies are necessary to the protection of the state, — that if they were disbanded, then France, or some other power, would arise and avenge their injuries, and cripple a state so potent to do evil. It may be so; but still the evils generated by these armies must be fatal to liberty, and antagonistic to those peaceful energies which produce the highest civilization. They are fatal to the peaceful virtues. The great Schiller has said: —

> "There exists
> An higher than the warrior's excellence.
> Great deeds of violence, adventures wild,
> And wonders of the moment, — these are not they
> Which generate the high, the blissful,
> And the enduring majesty.

I do not disdain the virtues which are developed by war; but great virtues are seldom developed by war, unless the war is stimulated by love of liberty or the conservation of immortal privileges worth more than the fortunes or the lives of men. A nation incapable of being roused in great necessities soon becomes in-

significant and degenerate, like Greece when it was incorporated with the Roman empire; but I have no admiration of a nation perpetually arming and perpetually seeking political aggrandizement, when the great ends of civilization are lost sight of. And this is what Frederic sought, and his successors who cherished his ideas. The legacy he bequeathed to the world was not emancipating ideas, but the policy of military aggrandizement. And yet, has civilization no higher aim than the imitation of the ancient Romans? Can nations progressively become strong by ignoring the spirit of Christianity? Is a nation only to thrive by adopting the sentiments peculiar to robbers and bandits? I know that Prussia has not neglected education, or science, or industrial energy; but these have been made subservient to military aims. The highest civilization is that which best develops the virtues of the heart and the energies of the mind: on these the strength of man is based. It may be necessary for Prussia, in the complicated relations of governments, and in view of possible dangers, to sustain vast standing armies; but the larger these are, the more do they provoke other nations to do the same, and to eat out the vitals of national wealth. That nation is the greatest which seeks to reduce, rather than augment, forces which prey upon its resources and which are a perpetual menace. And hence the vast standing armies which conquerors

seek to maintain are not an aid to civilization, but on the other hand tend to destroy it; unless by civilization and national prosperity are meant an ever-expanding policy of military aggrandizement, by which weaker and unoffending states may be gradually absorbed by irresistible despotism, like that of the Romans, whose final and logical development proves fatal to all other nationalities and liberties, — yea, to literature and art and science and industry, the extinction of which is the moral death of an empire, however grand and however boastful, only to be succeeded by new creations, through the fires of successive wars and hateful anarchies.

In one point, and one alone, I see the Providence which permitted the military aggrandizement to which Frederic and his successors aimed; and that is, in furnishing a barrier to the future conquests of a more barbarous people, — I mean the Russians; even as the conquests of Charlemagne presented a barrier to the future irruptions of barbarous tribes on his northern frontier. Russia — that rude, demoralized, Slavonic empire — cannot conquer Europe until it has first destroyed the political and military power of Germany. United and patriotic, Germany can keep at present the Russians at bay, and direct the stream of invasion to the East rather than the South; so that Europe will not become either Cossack or French, as Napoleon predicted. In this light the military genius and power of

Germany, which Frederic did so much to develop, may be designed for the protection of European civilization and the Protestant religion.

But I will not speculate on the aims of Providence, or the evil to be overruled for good. With my limited vision, I can only present facts and their immediate consequences. I can only deduce the moral truths which are logically to be drawn from a career of wicked ambition. These truths are a part of that moral wisdom which experience confirms, and which alone should be the guiding lesson to all statesmen and all empires. Let us pursue the right, and leave the consequences to Him who rules the fate of war, and guides the nations to the promised period when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and universal peace shall herald the reign of the Saviour of the world.

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XLIV.

EDMUND BURKE.

POLITICAL MORALITY.

A. D. 1730–1797.

XLIV.

EDMUND BURKE.

POLITICAL MORALITY.

IT would be difficult to select an example of a more lofty and irreproachable character among the great statesmen of England than Edmund Burke. He is not a puzzle, like Oliver Cromwell, although there are inconsistencies in the opinions he advanced from time to time. He takes very much the same place in the parliamentary history of his country as Cicero took in the Roman senate. Like that greatest of Roman orators and statesmen, Burke was upright, conscientious, conservative, religious, and profound. Like him, he lifted up his earnest voice against corruption in the government, against great state criminals, against demagogues, against rash innovations. Whatever diverse opinions may exist as to his political philosophy, there is only one opinion as to his character, which commands universal respect. Although he was the most conservative of statesmen, clinging to the Constitution, and to consecrated traditions and associations both in Church and

State, still his name is associated with the most important and salutary reforms which England made for half a century. He seems to have been sent to instruct and guide legislators in a venal and corrupt age. To my mind Burke looms up, after the lapse of a century, as a prodigy of thought and knowledge, devoted to the good of his country; an unselfish and disinterested patriot, as wise and sagacious as he was honest; a sage whose moral wisdom shines brighter and brighter, since it was based on the immutable principles of justice and morality. One can extract more profound and striking epigrams from his speeches and writings than from any prose writer that England has produced, if we except Francis Bacon. And these writings and speeches are still valued as among the most precious legacies of former generations; they form a thesaurus of political wisdom which statesmen can never exhaust. Burke has left an example which all statesmen will do well to follow. He was not a popular favorite, like Fox and Pitt; he was not born to greatness, like North and Newcastle; he was not liked by the king or the nobility; he was generally in the ranks of the opposition; he was a new man, like Cicero, in an aristocratic age, — yet he conquered by his genius the proudest prejudices; he fought his way upward, inch by inch; he was the founder of a new national policy, although it was bitterly opposed; and he died universally venerated for

his integrity, wisdom, and foresight. He was the most remarkable man, on the whole, who has taken part in public affairs, from the Revolution to our times. Of course, the life and principles of so great a man are a study. If history has any interest or value, it is to show the influence of such a man on his own age and the ages which have succeeded, — to point out his contribution to civilization.

Edmund Burke was born, 1730, of respectable parents in Ireland. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, where he made a fair proficiency, but did not give promise of those rare powers which he afterwards exhibited. He was no prodigy, like Cicero, Pitt, and Macaulay. He early saw that his native country presented no adequate field for him, and turned his steps to London at the age of twenty, where he entered as a student of law in the Inner Temple,—since the Bar was then, what it was at Rome, what it still is in modern capitals, the usual resort of ambitious young men. But Burke did not like the law as a profession, and early dropped the study of it; not because he failed in industry, for he was the most plodding of students; not because he was deficient in the gift of speech, for he was a born orator; not because his mind repelled severe logical deductions, for he was the most philosophical of the great orators of his day, — not be-

cause the law was not a noble field for the exercise of the highest faculties of the mind, but probably because he was won by the superior fascinations of literature and philosophy. Bacon could unite the study of divine philosophy with professional labors as a lawyer, also with the duties of a legislator; but the instances are rare where men have united three distinct spheres, and gained equal distinction in all. Cicero did, and Bacon, and Lord Brougham; but not Erskine, nor Pitt, nor Canning. Even two spheres are as much as most distinguished men have filled, — the law with politics, like Thurlow and Webster; or politics with literature, like Gladstone and Disraeli. Dr. Johnson, Garrick, and Reynolds, the early friends of Burke, filled only one sphere.

The early literary life of Burke was signalized by his essay on "The Sublime and Beautiful," original in its design and execution, a model of philosophical criticism, extorting the highest praises from Dugald Stewart and the Abbé Raynal, and attracting so much attention that it speedily became a text-book in the universities. Fortunately he was able to pursue literature, with the aid of a small patrimony (about £300 a year), without being doomed to the hard privations of Johnson, or the humiliating shifts of Goldsmith. He lived independently of patronage from the great, — the bitterest trial of the literati of the eighteenth century, which drove

Cowper mad, and sent Rousseau to attics and solitudes, — so that, in his humble but pleasant home, with his young wife, with whom he lived amicably, he could see his friends, the great men of the age, and bestow an unostentatious charity, and maintain his literary rank and social respectability.

I have sometimes wondered why Burke did not pursue this quiet and beautiful life, — free from the turmoils of public contest, with leisure, and friends, and Nature, and truth, — and prepare treatises which would have been immortal, for he was equal to anything he attempted. But such was not to be. He was needed in the House of Commons, then composed chiefly of fox-hunting squires and younger sons of nobles (a body as ignorant as it was aristocratic), — the representatives not of the people but of the landed proprietors, intent on aggrandizing their families at the expense of the nation, — and of fortunate merchants, manufacturers, and capitalists, in love with monopolies. Such an assembly needed at that day a schoolmaster, a teacher in the principles of political economy and political wisdom; a leader in reforming disgraceful abuses; a lecturer on public duties and public wrongs; a patriot who had other views than spoils and place; a man who saw the right, and was determined to uphold it whatever the number or power of his opponents. So Edmund Burke was sent among them, — ambitious

doubtless, stern, intellectually proud, incorruptible, independent, not disdainful of honors and influence, but eager to render public services.

It has been the great ambition of Englishmen since the Revolution to enter Parliament, not merely for political influence, but also for social position. Only rich men, or members of great families, have found it easy to do so. To such men a pecuniary compensation is a small affair. Hence, members of Parliament have willingly served without pay, which custom has kept poor men of ability from aspiring to the position. It was not easy, even for such a man as Burke, to gain admission into this aristocratic assembly. He did not belong to a great family; he was only a man of genius, learning, and character. The squirearchy of that age cared no more for literary fame than the Roman aristocracy did for a poet or an actor. So Burke, ambitious and able as he was, must bide his time.

His first step in a political career was as private secretary to Gerard Hamilton, who was famous for having made but one speech, and who was chief secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, the Earl of Halifax. Burke soon resigned his situation in disgust, since he was not willing to be a mere political tool. But his singular abilities had attracted the attention of the prime-minister, Lord Rockingham, who made him

his private secretary, and secured his entrance into Parliament. Lord Verney, for a seat in the privy council, was induced to give him a "rotten borough."

Burke entered the House of Commons in 1765, at thirty-five years of age. He began his public life when the nation was ruled by the great Whig families, whose ancestors had fought the battles of reform in the times of Charles and James. This party had held power for seventy years, had forgotten the principles of the Revolution, and had become venal and selfish, dividing among its chiefs the spoils of office. It had become as absolute and unscrupulous as the old kings whom it had once dethroned. It was an oligarchy of a few powerful whig noblemen, whose rule was supreme in England. Burke joined this party, but afterwards deserted it, or rather broke it up, when he perceived its arbitrary character, and its disregard of the fundamental principles of the Constitution. He was able to do this after its unsuccessful attempt to coerce the American colonies.

American difficulties were the great issue of that day. The majority of the Parliament, both Lords and Commons, — sustained by King George III., one of the most narrow-minded, obstinate, and stupid princes who ever reigned in England; who believed in an absolute jurisdiction over the colonies as an integral part of the empire, and was bent not only in enforcing this juris-

diction, but also resorted to the most offensive and impolitic measures to accomplish it, — this omnipotent Parliament, fancying it had a right to tax America without her consent, without a representation even, was resolved to carry out the abstract rights of a supreme governing power, both in order to assert its prerogative and to please certain classes in England who wished relief from the burden of taxation. And because Parliament had this power, it would use it, against the dictates of expediency and the instincts of common-sense; yea, in defiance of the great elemental truth in government that even thrones rest on the affections of the people. Blinded and infatuated with notions of prerogative, it would not even learn lessons from that conquered country which for five hundred years it had vainly attempted to coerce, and which it could finally govern only by a recognition of its rights.

Now, the great career of Burke began by opposing the leading opinions of his day in reference to the coercion of the American colonies. He discarded all theories and abstract rights. He would not even discuss the subject whether Parliament had a right to tax the colonies. He took the side of expediency and common-sense. It was enough for him that it was foolish and irritating to attempt to exercise abstract powers which could not be carried out. He foresaw and he predicted the consequences of attempting to coerce such a people as the

Americans with the forces which England could command. He pointed out the infatuation of the ministers of the crown, then led by Lord North. His speech against the Boston Port Bill was one of the most brilliant specimens of oratory ever displayed in the House of Commons. He did not encourage the colonies in rebellion, but pointed out the course they would surely pursue if the irritating measures of the Government were not withdrawn. He advocated conciliation, the withdrawal of theoretic rights, the repeal of obnoxious taxes, the removal of restrictions on American industry, the withdrawal of monopolies and of ungenerous distinctions. He would bind the two countries together by a cord of love. When some member remarked that it was horrible for children to rebel against their parents, Burke replied: "It is true the Americans are our children; but when children ask for bread, shall we give them a stone?" For ten years he labored with successive administrations to procure reconciliation. He spoke nearly every day. He appealed to reason, to justice, to common-sense. But every speech he made was a battle with ignorance and prejudice. "If you must employ your strength," said he indignantly, "employ it to uphold some honorable right. I do not enter upon metaphysical distinctions, — I hate the very name of them. Nobody can be argued into slavery. If you cannot reconcile your sovereignty with their free-

dom, the colonists will cast your sovereignty in your face. It is not enough that a statesman means well; duty demands that what is right should not only be made known, but be made prevalent, — that what is evil should not only be detected, but be defeated. Do not dream that your registers, your bonds, your affidavits, your instructions, are the things which hold together the great texture of the mysterious whole. These dead instruments do not make a government. It is the spirit that pervades and vivifies an empire which infuses that obedience without which your army would be a base rabble and your navy nothing but rotten timber." Such is a fair specimen of his eloquence, — earnest, practical, to the point, yet appealing to exalted sentiments, and pervaded with moral wisdom; the result of learning as well as the dictate of a generous and enlightened policy. When reason failed, he resorted to sarcasm and mockery. "Because," said he, "we have a right to tax America we must do it; risk everything, forfeit everything, take into consideration nothing but our right. O infatuated ministers! Like a silly man, full of his prerogative over the beasts of the field, who says, there is wool on the back of a wolf, and therefore he must be sheared. What! shear a wolf? Yes. But have you considered the trouble? Oh, I have considered nothing but my right. A wolf is an animal that has wool; all animals that have

wool are to be sheared; and therefore I will shear the wolf."

But I need not enlarge on his noble efforts to prevent a war with the colonies. They were all in vain. You cannot reason with infatuation, — *Quem deus vult perdere, prius dementat.* The logic of events at last showed the wisdom of Burke and the folly of the king and his ministers, and of the nation at large. The disasters and the humiliation which attended the American war compelled the ministry to resign, and the Marquis of Rockingham became prime-minister in 1782, and Burke, the acknowledged leader of his party, became paymaster of the forces, — an office at one time worth £25,000 a year, before the reform which Burke had instigated. But this great statesman was not admitted to the cabinet; George III. did not like him, and his connections were not sufficiently powerful to overcome the royal objection. In our times he would have been rewarded with a seat on the treasury bench; with less talents than he had, the commoners of our day become prime-ministers. But Burke did not long enjoy even the office of paymaster. On the death of Lord Rockingham, a few months after he had formed the ministry, Burke retired from the only office he ever held. And he retired to Beaconsfield, — an estate which he had purchased with the assistance of his friend Rockingham, where he lived when parliamentary duties per-

mitted, in that state of blended elegance, leisure, and study which is to be found, in the greatest perfection, in England alone.

The political power of Burke culminated at the close of the war with America, but not his political influence: and there is a great difference between power and influence. Nor do we read that Burke, after this, headed the opposition. That position was shared by Charles James Fox, who ultimately supplanted his master as the leader of his party; not because Burke declined in wisdom or energy, but because Fox had more skill as a debater, more popular sympathies, and more influential friends. Burke, like Gladstone, was too stern, too irritable, too imperious, too intellectually proud, perhaps too unyielding, to control such an ignorant, prejudiced, and aristocratic body as the House of Commons, jealous of his ascendency and writhing under his rebukes. It must have been galling to the great philosopher to yield the palm to lesser men; but such has ever been the destiny of genius, except in crises of public danger. Of all things that politicians hate is the domination of a man who will not stoop to flatter, who cannot be bribed, and who will be certain to expose vices and wrongs. The world will not bear rebukes. The fate of prophets is to be stoned. A stern moral greatness is repulsive to the weak and wicked. Parties reward mediocre men, whom they can

use or bend; and the greatest benefactors lose their popularity when they oppose the enthusiasm of new ideas, or become austere in their instructions. Thus the greatest statesman that this country has produced since Alexander Hamilton, lost his prestige when his conciliating policy became offensive to a rising party whose watchword was "the higher law," although, by his various conflicts with Southern leaders and his loyalty to the Constitution, he educated the people to sustain the very war which he foresaw and dreaded. And had that accomplished senator from Massachusetts, Charles Sumner, who succeeded to Webster's seat, and who in his personal appearance and advocacy for reform strikingly resembled Burke, — had he remained uninjured to our day, with increasing intellectual powers and profounder moral wisdom, I doubt whether even he would have had much influence with our present legislators; for he had all the intellectual defects of both Burke and Webster, and never was so popular as either of them at one period of their career, while he certainly was inferior to both in native force, experience, and attainments.

The chief labors of Burke for the first ten years of his parliamentary life had been mainly in connection with American affairs, and which the result proved he comprehended better than any man in England. Those of the next ten years were directed principally to Indian

difficulties, in which he showed the same minuteness of knowledge, the same grasp of intellect, the same moral wisdom, the same good sense, and the same regard for justice, that he had shown concerning the colonies. But in discussing Indian affairs his eloquence takes a loftier flight; he is less conciliating, more in earnest, more concerned with the principles of immutable obligations. He abhors the cruelties and tyranny inflicted on India by Clive and Hastings. He could see no good from an aggrandizement purchased by injustice and wrong. If it was criminal for an individual to cheat and steal, it was equally atrocious for a nation to plunder and oppress another nation, infidel or pagan, white or black. A righteous anger burned in the breast of Burke as he reflected on the wrongs and miseries of the natives of India. Why should that ancient country be ruled for no other purpose than to enrich the younger sons of a grasping aristocracy and the servants of an insatiable and unscrupulous Company whose monopoly of spoils was the scandal of the age? If ever a reform was imperative in the government of a colony, it was surely in India, where the government was irresponsible. The English courts of justice there were more terrible to the natives than the very wrongs they pretended to redress. The customs and laws and moral ideas of the conquered country were spurned and ignored by the greedy scions

of gentility who were sent to rule a population ten times larger than that between the Humber and the Thames.

So Burke, after the most careful study of the condition of India, lifted up his voice against the iniquities which were winked at by Parliament. But his fierce protest arrayed against him all the parties that indorsed these wrongs, or who were benefited by them. I need not dwell on his protracted labors for ten years in behalf of right, without the sympathies of those who had formerly supported him. No speeches were ever made in the English House of Commons which equalled, in eloquence and power, those he made on the Nabob of Arcot's debts and the impeachment of Warren Hastings In these famous philippics, he fearlessly exposed the peculations, the misrule, the oppression, and the inhuman heartlessness of the Company's servants, — speeches which extorted admiration, while they humiliated and chastised. I need not describe the nine years' prosecution of a great criminal, and the escape of Hastings, more guilty and more fortunate than Verres, from the punishment he merited, through legal technicalities, the apathy of men in power, the private influence of the throne, and the sympathies which fashion excited in his behalf, — and, more than all, because of the undoubted service he had rendered to his country, if it *was* a service to extend her rule by questionable

means to the farthermost limits of the globe. I need not speak of the obloquy which Burke incurred from the press, which teemed with pamphlets and books and articles to undermine his great authority, all in the interests of venal and powerful monopolists. Nor did he escape the wrath of the electors of Bristol, — a narrow-minded town of India traders and Negro dealers, — who withdrew from him their support. He had been solicited, in the midst of his former éclat, to represent this town, rather than the "rotten borough" of Wendover; and he proudly accepted the honor, and was the idol of his constituents until he presumed to disregard their instructions in matters of which he considered they were incompetent to judge. His famous letter to the electors, in which he refutes and ridicules their claim to instruct him, as the shoemakers of Lynn wished to instruct Daniel Webster, is a model of irony, as well as a dignified rebuke of all ignorant constituencies, and a lofty exposition of the duties of a statesman rather than of a politician.

He had also incurred the displeasure of the Bristol electors by his manly defence of the rights of the Irish Catholics, who since the conquest of William III. had been subjected to the most unjust and annoying treatment that ever disgraced a Protestant government. The injustices under which Ireland groaned were nearly as repulsive as the cruelties inflicted upon the

Protestants of France during the reign of Louis XIV. "On the suppression of the rebellion under Tyrconnel," says Morley, "nearly the whole of the land was confiscated, the peasants were made beggars and outlaws, the Penal Laws against Catholics were enforced, and the peasants were prostrate in despair." Even in 1765 "the native Irish were regarded by their Protestant oppressors with exactly that combination of intense contempt and loathing, rage and terror, which his American counterpart would have divided between the Indian and the Negro." Not the least of the labors of Burke was to bring to the attention of the nation the wrongs inflicted on the Irish, and the impossibility of ruling a people who had such just grounds for discontent. "His letter upon the propriety of admitting the Catholics to the elective franchise is one of the wisest of all his productions, — so enlightened is its idea of toleration, so sagacious is its comprehension of political exigencies." He did not live to see his ideas carried out, but he was among the first to prepare the way for Catholic emancipation in later times.

But a greater subject than colonial rights, or Indian wrongs, or persecution of the Irish Catholics agitated the mind of Burke, to which he devoted the energies of his declining years; and this was, the agitation growing out of the French Revolution. When that "roaring conflagration of anarchies" broke out, he was in the

full maturity of his power and his fame, — a wise old statesman, versed in the lessons of human experience. who detested sophistries and abstract theories and violent reforms; a man who while he loved liberty more than any political leader of his day, loathed the crimes committed in its name, and who was sceptical of any reforms which could not be carried on without a wanton destruction of the foundations of society itself. He was also a Christian who planted himself on the certitudes of religious faith, and was shocked by the flippant and shallow infidelity which passed current for progress and improvement. Next to the infidel spirit which would make Christianity and a corrupted church identical, as seen in the mockeries of Voltaire, and would destroy both under the guise of hatred of superstition, he despised those sentimentalities with which Rousseau and his admirers would veil their disgusting immoralities. To him hypocrisy and infidelity, under whatever name they were baptized by the new apostles of human rights, were mischievous and revolting. And as an experienced statesman he held in contempt the inexperience of the Revolutionary leaders, and the unscrupulous means they pursued to accomplish even desirable ends.

No man more than Burke admitted the necessity of even radical reforms, but he would have accomplished them without bloodshed and cruelties. He would not

have removed undeniable evils by introducing still greater ones. He regarded the remedies proposed by the Revolutionary quacks as worse than the disease which they professed to cure. No man knew better than he the corruptions of the Catholic church in France, and the persecuting intolerance which that church had stimulated there ever since the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, — an intolerance so cruel that to be married unless in accordance with Catholic usage was to live in concubinage, and to be suspected of Calvinism was punishable by imprisonment or the galleys. But because the established church was corrupt and intolerant, he did not see the necessity for the entire and wholesale confiscation of its lands and possessions (which had not been given originally by the nation, but were the bequests of individuals), thereby giving a vital wound to all the rights of property which civilization in all countries has held sacred and inviolable. Burke knew that the Bourbon absolute monarchy was oppressive and tyrannical, extravagant and indifferent to the welfare of the people; but he would not get rid of it by cutting off the head of the king, especially when Louis was willing to make great concessions: he would have limited his power, or driven him into exile as the English punished James II. He knew that the nobles abused their privileges; he would have taken them away rather than attempt

to annul their order, and decimate them by horrid butcheries. He did not deny the necessity of reforms so searching that they would be almost tantamount to revolution; but he would not violate both constitutional forms and usages, and every principle of justice and humanity, in order to effect them.

To Burke's mind, the measures of the revolutionists were all mixed up with impieties, sophistries, absurdities, and blasphemies, to say nothing of cruelties and murders. What good could grow out of such an evil tree? Could men who ignored all duties be the expounders of rights? What structure could last, when its foundation was laid on the sands of hypocrisy, injustice, ignorance, and inexperience? What sympathy could such a man as Burke have for atheistic theories, or a social progress which scorned the only conditions by which society can be kept together? The advanced men who inaugurated the Reign of Terror were to him either fools, or fanatics, or assassins. He did not object to the meeting of the States-General to examine into the intolerable grievances, and, if necessary, to strip the king of tyrannical powers, for such a thing the English parliament had done; but it was quite another thing for *one branch* of the States-General to constitute itself the nation, and usurp the powers and functions of the other two branches; to sweep away, almost in a single night, the constitution of the realm;

to take away all the powers of the king, imprison him, mock him, insult him, and execute him, and then to cut off the heads of the nobles who supported him, and of all people who defended him, even women themselves, and convert the whole land into a Pandemonium! What contempt must he have had for legislators who killed their king, decimated their nobles, robbed their clergy, swept away all social distinctions, abolished the rites of religion, — all symbols, honors, and privileges; all that was ancient, all that was venerable, all that was poetic, even to abbey churches; yea, dug up the very bones of ancient monarchs from the consecrated vaults where they had reposed for centuries, and scattered them to the winds; and then amid the mad saturnalia of sacrilege, barbarity, and blasphemy to proclaim the reign of "Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality," with Marat for their leader, and Danton for their orator, and Robespierre for their high-priest; and, finally, to consummate the infamous farce of reform by openly setting up a wanton woman as the idol of their worship, under the name of the Goddess of Reason!

But while Burke saw only one side of these atrocities, he did not close his eyes to the necessity for reforms. Had he been a Frenchman, he would strenuously have lifted up his voice to secure them, but in a legal and constitutional manner, — not by violence, not by disregarding the principles of justice and morality to secure

a desirable end. He was one of the few statesmen then living who would not do evil that good might come. He was no Jesuit. There is a class of politicians who would have acted differently; and this class, in his day, was made up of extreme and radical people, with infidel sympathies. With this class he was no favorite, and never can be. Conservative people judge him by a higher standard; they shared at the time in his sympathies and prejudices.

Even in America the excesses of the Revolution excited general abhorrence; much more so in England. And it was these excesses, this mode of securing reform, not reform itself, which excited Burke's detestation. Who can wonder at this? Those who accept crimes as a necessary outbreak of revolutionary passions adopt a philosophy which would veil the world with a funereal and diabolical gloom. Reformers must be taught that no reforms achieved by crime are worth the cost. Nor is it just to brand an illustrious man with indifference to great moral and social movements because he would wait, sooner than upturn the very principles on which society is based. And here is the great difficulty in estimating the character and labors of Burke. Because he denounced the French Revolution, some think he was inconsistent with his early principles. Not at all; it was the crimes and excesses of the Revolution he denounced, not the impulse of

the French people to achieve their liberties. Those crimes and excesses he believed to be inconsistent with an enlightened desire for freedom; but freedom itself, to its utmost limit and application, consistent with law and order, he desired. Is it necessary for mankind to win its greatest boons by going through a sea of anarchies, madness, assassinations, and massacres? Those who take this view of revolution, it seems to me, are neither wise nor learned If a king makes war on his subjects, they are warranted in taking up arms in their defence, even if the civil war is followed by enormities. Thus the American colonies took up arms against George III.; but they did not begin with crimes. Louis XVI. did not take up arms against his subjects, nor league against them, until they had crippled and imprisoned him. He made even great concessions; he was willing to make still greater to save his crown. But the leaders of the revolution were not content with these, not even with the abolition of feudal privileges; they wanted to subvert the monarchy itself, to abolish the order of nobility, to sweep away even the Church, — not the Catholic establishment only, but the Christian religion also, with all the institutions which time and poetry had consecrated. Their new heaven and new earth was not the reign of the saints, which the millenarians of Cromwell's time prayed for devoutly, but a sort of communistic

equality, where every man could do precisely as he liked, take even his neighbor's property, and annihilate all distinctions of society, all inequalities of condition, — a miserable, fanatical dream, impossible to realize under any form of government which can be conceived. It was this spirit of reckless innovation, promulgated by atheists and drawn logically from some principles of the "Social Contract" of which Rousseau was the author, which excited the ire of Burke. It was license, and not liberty.

And while the bloody and irreligious excesses of the Revolution called out his detestation, the mistakes and incapacity of the new legislators excited his contempt. He condemned a *compulsory* paper currency, — not a paper currency, but a compulsory one, — and predicted bankruptcy. He ridiculed an army without a head, — not the instrument of the executive, but of a military democracy receiving orders from the clubs. He made sport of the legislature ruled by the commune, and made up not of men of experience, but of adventurers, stock-jobbers, directors of assignats, trustees for the sale of church-lands, who "took a constitution in hand as savages would a looking-glass," — a body made up of those courtiers who wished to cut off the head of their king of those priests who voted religion a nuisance, of those lawyers who called the laws a dead letter, of those philosophers who admitted no argument

but the guillotine, of those sentimentalists who chanted the necessity of more blood, of butchers and bakers and brewers who would exterminate the very people who bought from them.

And the result of all this wickedness and folly on the mind of Burke was the most eloquent and masterly political treatise probably ever written,—a treatise in which there may be found much angry rhetoric and some unsound principles, but which blazes with genius on every page, which coruscates with wit, irony, and invective; scornful and sad doubtless, yet full of moral wisdom; a perfect thesaurus of political truths. I have no words with which to express my admiration for the wisdom and learning and literary excellence of the "Reflections on the French Revolution" as a whole,—so luminous in statement, so accurate in the exposure of sophistries, so full of inspired intuitions, so Christian in its tone. This celebrated work was enough to make any man immortal. It was written and rewritten with the most conscientious care. It appeared in 1790; and so great were its merits, so striking, and yet so profound, that thirty thousand copies were sold in a few weeks. It was soon translated into all the languages of Europe, and was in the hands of all thinking men. It was hailed with especial admiration by Christian and conservative classes, though bitterly denounced by many intelligent people

as gloomy and hostile to progress. But whether liked or disliked, it made a great impression, and contributed to settle public opinion in reference to French affairs. What can be more just and enlightened than such sentiments as these, which represent the spirit of the treatise: —

"Because liberty is to be classed among the blessings of mankind, am I to felicitate a madman who has escaped from the restraints of his cell? There is no qualification for government but virtue and wisdom. Woe be to that country that would madly reject the service of talents and virtues. Nothing is an adequate representation of a State that does not represent its ability as well as property. Men have a right to justice, and the fruits of industry, and the acquisitions of their parents, and the improvement of their offspring, — to instruction in life and consolation in death; but they have no right to what is unreasonable, and what is not for their benefit. The new professors are so taken up with rights that they have totally forgotten duties; and without opening one new avenue to the understanding, they have succeeded in stopping those that lead to the heart. Those who attempt by outrage and violence to deprive men of any advantage which they hold under the laws, proclaim war against society. When, I ask, will such truths become obsolete among enlightened people; and when will they become stale?"

But with this fierce protest against the madness and violence of the French Revolution, the wisdom of Burke

and of the English nation ended. The most experienced and sagacious man of his age, with all his wisdom and prescience, could see only one side of the awful political hurricane which he was so eloquent in denouncing. His passions and his prejudices so warped his magnificent intellect, that he could not see the good which was mingled with the evil; that the doctrine of equality, if false when applied to the actual condition of men at their birth, is yet a state to which the institutions of society tend, under the influence of education and religion; that the common brotherhood of man, mocked by the tyrants which feudalism produced, is yet to be drawn from the Sermon on the Mount; that the blood of a plebeian carpenter is as good as that of an aristocratic captain of artillery; that public burdens which bear heavily on the poor should also be shared equally by the rich; that all laws should be abolished which institute unequal privileges; that taxes should be paid by nobles as well as by peasants; that every man should be unfettered in the choice of his calling and profession; that there should be unbounded toleration of religious opinions; that no one should be arbitrarily arrested and confined without trial and proof of crime; that men and women, with due regard to the rights of others, should be permitted to marry whomsoever they please; that, in fact, a total change in the spirit of government, so imperatively needed in France, was

necessary. These were among the great ideas which the reformers advocated, but which they did not know how practically to secure on those principles of justice which they abstractly invoked,— ideas never afterwards lost sight of, in all the changes of government. And it is remarkable that the flagrant evils which the Revolution so ruthlessly swept away have never since been revived, and never can be revived any more than the oracles of Dodona or the bulls of Mediæval Rome; amid the storms and the whirlwinds and the fearful convulsions and horrid anarchies and wicked passions of a great catastrophe, the imperishable ideas of progress forced their way.

Nor could Burke foresee the ultimate results of the Revolution any more than he would admit the truths which were overshadowed by errors and crimes. Nor, inflamed with rage and scorn, was he wise in the remedies he proposed. Only God can overrule the wrath of man, and cause melodious birth-songs to succeed the agonies of dissolution. Burke saw the absurdity of sophistical theories and impractical equality, — liberty running into license, and license running into crime; he saw pretensions, quackeries, inexperience, folly, and cruelty, and he prophesied what their legitimate effect would be: but he did not see in the Revolution the pent-up indignation and despair of centuries, nor did he hear the voices of hungry and oppressed

millions crying to heaven for vengeance. He did not recognize the chastening hand of God on tyrants and sensualists; he did not see the arm of retributive justice, more fearful than the daggers of Roman assassins, more stern than the overthrow of Persian hosts, more impressive than the handwriting on the wall of Belshazzar's palace; nor could he see how creation would succeed destruction amid the burnings of that vast funeral pyre. He foresaw, perhaps, that anarchy would be followed by military despotism; but he never anticipated a Napoleon Bonaparte, or the military greatness of a nation so recently ground down by Jacobin orators and sentimental executioners. He never dreamed that out of the depths and from the clouds and amid the conflagration there would come a deliverance, at least for a time, in the person of a detested conqueror; who would restore law, develop industry, secure order, and infuse enthusiasm into a country so nearly ruined, and make that country glorious beyond precedent, until his mad passion for unlimited dominion should arouse insulted nations to form a coalition which even he should not be powerful enough to resist, gradually hemming him round in a king-hunt, until they should at last confine him on a rock in the ocean, to meditate and to die.

Where Burke and the nation he aroused by his eloquence failed in wisdom, was in opposing this revolu-

tionary storm with bayonets. Had he and the leaders of his day confined themselves to rhetoric and arguments, if ever so exaggerated and irritating; had they allowed the French people to develop their revolution in their own way, as they had the right to do, — then the most dreadful war of modern times, which lasted twenty years, would have been confined within smaller limits Napoleon would have had no excuse for aggressive warfare: Pitt would not have died of a broken heart; large standing armies, the curse of Europe, would not have been deemed so necessary; the ancient limits of France might have been maintained; and a policy of development might have been inaugurated, rather than a policy which led to future wars and national humiliation. The gigantic struggles of Napoleon began when France was attacked by foreign nations, fighting for their royalties and feudalities, and aiming to suppress a domestic revolution which was none of their concern, and which they imperfectly understood.

But at this point we must stop, for I tread on ground where only speculation presumes to stand. The time has not come to solve such a mighty problem as the French Revolution, or even the career of Napoleon Bonaparte. We can pronounce on the logical effects of right and wrong, — that violence leads to anarchy, and anarchy to ruin; but we cannot tell what would have been the destiny of France if the Revolution had not

produced Napoleon, nor what would have been the destiny of England if Napoleon had not been circumvented by the powers of Europe. On such questions we are children; the solution of them is hidden by the screens of destiny; we can only speculate. And since we short sighted mortals cannot tell what will be the ultimate effect of the great agitations of society, whether begun in noble aspirations or in depraved passions, it is enough for us to settle down, with firm convictions, on what we can see, — that crimes, under whatever name they go, are eternally to be reprobated, whatever may be the course they are made to take by Him who rules the universe. It would be difficult to single out any memorable war in this world's history which has not been ultimately overruled for the good of the world, whatever its cause or character, — like the Crusades, the most unfortunate in their immediate effects of all the great wars which nations have madly waged. But this only proves that God is stronger than devils, and that he overrules the wrath of man. "It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." There is only one standard by which to judge the actions of men; there is only one rule whereby to guide nations or individuals, — and that is, to do right; to act on the principles of immutable justice.

Now, whatever were the defects in the character or

philosophy of Burke, it cannot be denied that this was the law which he attempted to obey, the rule which he taught to his generation. In this light, his life and labors command our admiration, because he *did* uphold the right and condemn the wrong, and was sufficiently clear-headed to see the sophistries which concealed the right and upheld the wrong. That was his peculiar excellence. How loftily his majestic name towers above the other statesmen of his troubled age! Certainly no equal to him, in England, has since appeared, in those things which give permanent fame. The man who has most nearly approached him is Gladstone. If the character of our own Webster had been as reproachless as his intellect was luminous and comprehensive, he might be named in the same category of illustrious men. Like the odor of sanctity, which was once supposed to emanate from a Catholic saint, the halo of Burke's imperishable glory is shed around every consecrated retreat of that land which thus far has been the bulwark of European liberty. The English nation will not let him die; he cannot die in the hearts and memories of man any more than can Socrates or Washington. No nation will be long ungrateful for eminent public services, even if he who rendered them was stained by grave defects; for it is services which make men immortal. Much more will posterity reverence those benefactors whose private lives were in harmony

with their principles, — the Hales, the L'Hôpitals, the Hampdens of the world. To this class Burke undeniably belonged. All writers agree as to his purity of morals, his generous charities, his high social qualities, his genial nature, his love of simple pleasures, his deep affections, his reverence, his Christian life. He was a man of sorrows, it is true, like most profound and contemplative natures, whose labors are not fully appreciated, — like Cicero, Dante, and Michael Angelo. He was doomed, too, like Galileo, to severe domestic misfortunes. He was greatly afflicted by the death of his only son, in whom his pride and hopes were bound up. "I am like one of those old oaks which the late hurricane has scattered about me," said he. "I am torn up by the roots; I lie prostrate on the earth." And when care and disease hastened his departure from a world he adorned, his body was followed to the grave by the most illustrious of the great men of the land, and the whole nation mourned as for a brother or a friend.

But it is for his writings and published speeches that he leaves the most enduring fame; and what is most valuable in his writings is his elucidation of fundamental principles in morals and philosophy. And here was his power, — not his originality, for which he was distinguished in an eminent degree; not learning, which amazed his auditors; not sarcasm, of which he

was a master; not wit, with which he brought down the house; not passion, which overwhelmed even such a man as Hastings; not fluency, with every word in the language at his command; not criticism, so searching that no sophistry could escape him; not philosophy, musical as Apollo's lyre, — but *insight* into great principles, the moral force of truth clearly stated and fearlessly defended. This elevated him to a sphere which words and gestures, and the rich music and magnetism of voice and action can never reach, since it touched the heart and the reason and the conscience alike, and produced convictions that nothing can stifle. There were more famous and able men than he, in some respects, in Parliament at the time. Fox surpassed him in debate, Pitt in ready replies and adaptation to the genius of the house, Sheridan in wit, Townsend in parliamentary skill, Mansfield in legal acumen; but no one of these great men was so forcible as Burke in the statement of truths which future statesmen will value. And as he unfolded and applied the imperishable principles of right and wrong, he seemed like an ancient sage bringing down to earth the fire of the divinities he invoked and in which he believed, not to chastise and humiliate, but to guide and inspire.

In recapitulating the services by which Edmund Burke will ultimately be judged, I would say that he had a hand in almost every movement for which his

generation is applauded. He gave an impulse to almost every political discussion which afterwards resulted in beneficent reform. Some call him a croaker, without sympathy for the ideas on which modern progress is based; but he was really one of the great reformers of his day. He lifted up his voice against the slave-trade; he encouraged and lauded the labors of Howard; he supported the just claims of the Catholics; he attempted, though a churchman, to remove the restrictions to which dissenters were subjected; he opposed the cruel laws against insolvent debtors; he sought to soften the asperities of the Penal Code; he labored to abolish the custom of enlisting soldiers for life; he attempted to subvert the dangerous powers exercised by judges in criminal prosecutions for libel; he sought financial reform in various departments of the State; he would have abolished many useless offices in the government; he fearlessly exposed the wrongs of the East India Company; he tried to bring to justice the greatest political criminal of the day; he took the right side of American difficulties, and advocated a policy which would have secured for half a century longer the allegiance of the American colonies, and prevented the division of the British empire; he advocated measures which saved England, possibly, from French subjugation; he threw the rays of his genius over all political discussions; and he left treatises which from his

day to ours have proved a mine of political and moral wisdom, for all whose aim or business it has been to study the principles of law or government. These, truly, were services for which any country should be grateful, and which should justly place Edmund Burke on the list of great benefactors. These constitute a legacy of which all nations should be proud.

AUTHORITIES.

Works and Correspondence of Edmund Burke; Life and Times of Edmund Burke, by Macknight (the ablest and fullest yet written); An Historical Study, by Morley (very able); Lives of Burke by Croly, Prior, and Bisset; Grenville Papers; Parliamentary History; the Encyclopedia Britannica has a full article on Burke; Massey's History of England; Chatham's Correspondence; Moore's Life of Sheridan; also the Lives of Pitt and Fox; Lord Brougham's Sketch of Burke; C. W. Dilke's Papers of a Critic; Boswell's Life of Johnson. The most brilliant of Burke's writings, "Reflections on the French Revolution," should be read by everybody.

XLV.

MIRABEAU.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

A. D. 1749–1791.

XLV.

MIRABEAU.

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THREE events of pre-eminent importance have occurred in our modern times; these are the Protestant Reformation, the American War of Independence, and the French Revolution.

The most complicated and varied of these great movements is the French Revolution, on which thousands of volumes have been written, so that it is impossible even to classify the leading events and the ever-changing features of that rapid and exciting movement. The first act of that great drama was the attempt of reformers and patriots to destroy feudalism, — with its privileges and distinctions and injustices, — by unscrupulous and wild legislation, and to give a new constitution to the State.

The best representative of this movement was Mirabeau, and I accordingly select him as the subject of this lecture. I cannot describe the violence and anarchy which succeeded the Reign of Terror, ending

in a Directory, and the usurpation of Napoleon. The subject is so vast that I must confine myself to a single point, in which, however, I would unfold the principles of the reformers and the logical results to which their principles led.

The remote causes of the French Revolution I have already glanced at, in a previous lecture. The most obvious of these, doubtless, was the misgovernment which began with Louis XIV. and continued so disgracefully under Louis XV.; which destroyed all reverence for the throne, even loyalty itself, the chief support of the monarchy. The next most powerful influence that created revolution was feudalism, which ground down the people by unequal laws, and irritated them by the haughtiness, insolence, and heartlessness of the aristocracy, and thus destroyed all respect for them, ending in bitter animosities. Closely connected with these two gigantic evils was the excessive taxation, which oppressed the nation and made it discontented and rebellious. The fourth most prominent cause of agitation was the writings of infidel philosophers and economists, whose unsound and sophistical theories held out fallacious hopes, and undermined those sentiments by which all governments and institutions are preserved. These will be incidentally presented, as thereby we shall be able to trace the career of the remarkable man who controlled the National Assembly,

and who applied the torch to the edifice whose horrid and fearful fires he would afterwards have suppressed. It is easy to destroy; it is difficult to reconstruct. Nor is there any human force which can arrest a national conflagration when once it is kindled: only on its ashes can a new structure arise, and this only after long and laborious efforts and humiliating disappointments.

It might have been possible for the Government to contend successfully with the various elements of discontent among the people, intoxicated with those abstract theories of rights which Rousseau had so eloquently defended, if it had possessed a strong head and the sinews of war. But Louis XVI., a modest, timid, temperate, moral young man of twenty-three, by the death of his father and elder brothers had succeeded to the throne of his dissolute grandfather at just the wrong time. He was a gentleman, but no ruler. He had no personal power, and the powers of his kingdom had been dissipated by his reckless predecessors. Not only was the army demoralized, and inclined to fraternize with the people, but there was no money to pay the troops or provide for the ordinary expenses of the Court. There was an alarming annual deficit, and the finances were utterly disordered. Successive ministers had exhausted all ordinary resources and the most ingenious forms of taxation. They made promises, and

resorted to every kind of expediency, which had only a temporary effect. The primal evils remained. The national treasury was empty. Calonne and Necker pursued each a different policy, and with the same results. The extravagance of the one and the economy of the other were alike fatal. Nobody would make sacrifices in a great national exigency. The nobles and the clergy adhered tenaciously to their privileges, and the Court would curtail none of its unnecessary expenses. Things went on from bad to worse, and the financiers were filled with alarm. National bankruptcy stared everybody in the face.

If the King had been a Richelieu, he would have dealt summarily with the nobles and rebellious mobs. He would have called to his aid the talents of the nation, appealed to its patriotism, compelled the Court to make sacrifices, and prevented the printing and circulation of seditious pamphlets. The Government should have allied itself with the people, granted their requests, and marched to victory under the name of patriotism. But Louis XVI. was weak, irresolute, vacillating, and uncertain. He was a worthy sort of man, with good intentions, and without the vices of his predecessors. But he was surrounded with incompetent ministers and bad advisers, who distrusted the people and had no sympathy with their wrongs. He would have made concessions, if his ministers had

advised him. He was not ambitious, nor unpatriotic; he simply did not know what to do.

In his perplexity, he called together the principal heads of the nobility, — some hundred and twenty great seigneurs, called the Notables; but this assembly was dissolved without accomplishing anything. It was full of jealousies, and evinced no patriotism. It would not part with its privileges or usurpations.

It was at this crisis that Mirabeau first appeared upon the stage, as a pamphleteer, writing bitter and envenomed attacks on the government, and exposing with scorching and unsparing sarcasms the evils of the day, especially in the department of finance. He laid bare to the eyes of the nation the sores of the body politic, — the accumulated evils of centuries. He exposed all the shams and lies to which ministers had resorted. He was terrible in the fierceness and eloquence of his assaults, and in the lucidity of his statements. Without being learned, he contrived to make use of the learning of others, and made it burn with the brilliancy of his powerful and original genius. Everybody read his various essays and tracts, and was filled with admiration. But his moral character was bad, — was even execrable, and notoriously outrageous. He was kind-hearted and generous, made friends and used them. No woman, it is said, could resist his marvellous fascination, — all the more remarkable since his

face was as ugly as that of Wilkes, and was marked by the small-pox. The excesses of his private life, and his ungovernable passions, made him distrusted by the Court and the Government. He was both hated and admired.

Mirabeau belonged to a noble family of very high rank in Provence, of Italian descent. His father, Marquis Mirabeau, was a man of liberal sentiments, — not unknown to literary fame by his treatises on political economy, — but was eccentric and violent. Although his oldest son, Count Mirabeau, the subject of this lecture, was precocious intellectually, and very bright, so that the father was proud of him, he was yet so ungovernable and violent in his temper, and got into so many disgraceful scrapes, that the Marquis was compelled to discipline him severely, — all to no purpose, inasmuch as he was injudicious in his treatment, and ultimately cruel. He procured *lettres de cachet* from the King, and shut up his disobedient and debauched son in various state-prisons. But the Count generally contrived to escape, only to get into fresh difficulties; so that he became a wanderer and an exile, compelled to support himself by his pen.

Mirabeau was in Berlin, in a sort of semi-diplomatic position, when the Assembly of Notables was convened. His keen prescience and profound sagacity induced him to return to his distracted country, where he knew his

services would soon be required. Though debauched, extravagant, and unscrupulous, he was not unpatriotic. He had an intense hatred of feudalism, and saw in its varied inequalities the chief source of the national calamities. His detestation of feudal injustices was intensified by his personal sufferings in the various castles where he had been confined by arbitrary power. At this period, the whole tendency of his writings was towards the destruction of the *ancien régime*. He breathed defiance, scorn, and hatred against the very class to which he belonged. He was a Catiline, — an aristocratic demagogue, revolutionary in his spirit and aims; so that he was mistrusted, feared, and detested by the ruling powers, and by the aristocracy generally, while he was admired and flattered by the people, who were tolerant of his vices and imperious temper.

On the wretched failure of the Assembly of the Notables, the prime-minister, Necker, advised the King to assemble the States-General, — the three orders of the State; the nobles, the clergy, and a representation of the people. It seemed to the Government impossible to proceed longer, amid universal distress and hopeless financial embarrassment, without the aid and advice of this body, which had not been summoned for one hundred and fifty years.

It became, of course, an object of ambition to Count

Mirabeau to have a seat in this illustrious assembly. To secure this, he renounced his rank, became a plebeian, solicited the votes of the people, and was elected a deputy both from Marseilles and Aix. He chose Aix, and his great career began with the meeting of the States-General at Versailles, the 5th of May, 1789. It was composed of three hundred nobles, three hundred priests, and six hundred deputies of the third estate, — twelve hundred in all. It is generally conceded that these representatives of the three orders were on the whole a very respectable body of men, patriotic and incorruptible, but utterly deficient in political experience and in powers of debate. The deputies were largely composed of country lawyers, honest, but as conceited as they were inexperienced. The vanity of Frenchmen is so inordinate that nearly every man in the assembly felt quite competent to govern the nation or frame a constitution. Enthusiasm and hope animated the whole assembly, and everybody saw in this States-General the inauguration of a glorious future.

One of the most brilliant and impressive chapters in Carlyle's "French Revolution" — that great prose poem — is devoted to the procession of the three orders from the church of St. Louis to the church of Notre Dame, to celebrate the Mass, parts of which I quote.

"Shouts rend the air; one shout, at which Grecian birds might drop dead. It is indeed a stately, solemn sight. The Elected of France and then the Court of France; they are marshalled, and march there, all in prescribed place and costume. Our Commons in plain black mantle and white cravat; Noblesse in gold-worked, bright-dyed cloaks of velvet, resplendent, rustling with laces, waving with plumes; the Clergy in rochet, alb, and other clerical insignia; lastly the King himself and household, in their brightest blaze of pomp, — their brightest and final one. Which of the six hundred individuals in plain white cravats that have come up to regenerate France might one guess would become their king? For a king or a leader they, as all bodies of men, must have. He with the thick locks, will it be? Through whose shaggy beetle-brows, and rough-hewn, seamed, carbuncled face, there look natural ugliness, small-pox, incontinence, bankruptcy, — and burning fire of genius? It is Gabriel Honoré Riquetti de Mirabeau; man-ruling deputy of Aix! Yes, that is the Type-Frenchman of this epoch; as Voltaire was of the last. He is French in his aspirations, acquisitions, in his virtues and vices. Mark him well. The National Assembly were all different without that one; nay, he might say with old Despot, — The National Assembly? I am that.

"Now, if Mirabeau is the greatest of these six hundred, who may be the meanest? Shall we say that anxious, slight, ineffectual-looking man, under thirty, in spectacles, his eyes troubled, careful; with upturned face, snuffing dimly the uncertain future time; complexion of a multiplex atrabilious

color, the final shade of which may be pale sea-green? That greenish-colored individual is an advocate of Arras; his name is Maximilien Robespierre.

"Between which extremes of grandest and meanest, so many grand and mean, roll on towards their several destinies in that procession. There is experienced Mounier, whose presidential parliamentary experience the stream of things shall soon leave stranded. A Pétion has left his gown and briefs at Chartres for a stormier sort of pleading. A Protestant-clerical St. Etienne, a slender young eloquent and vehement Barnave, will help to regenerate France.

"And then there is worthy Doctor Guillotin, Bailly likewise, time-honored historian of astronomy, and the Abbé Sièyes, cold, but elastic, wiry, instinct with the pride of logic, passionless, or with but one passion, that of self-conceit. This is the Sièyes who shall be system-builder, constitutional-builder-general, and build constitutions which shall unfortunately fall before we get the scaffolding away.

"Among the nobles are Liancourt, and La Rochefoucault, and pious Lally, and Lafayette, whom Mirabeau calls Grandison Cromwell, and the Viscount Mirabeau, called Barrel Mirabeau, on account of his rotundity, and the quantity of strong liquor he contains. Among the clergy is the Abbé Maury, who does not want for audacity, and the Curé Grégoire who shall be a bishop, and Talleyrand-Pericord, his reverence of Autun, with sardonic grimness, a man living in falsehood, and on falsehood, yet not wholly a false man.

"So, in stately procession, the elected of France pass on,

some to honor, others to dishonor; not a few towards massacre, confusion, emigration, desperation."

For several weeks this famous States-General remain inactive, unable to agree whether they shall deliberate in a single hall or in three separate chambers. The deputies, of course, wish to deliberate in a single chamber, since they equal in number both the clergy and nobles, and some few nobles had joined them, and more than a hundred of the clergy. But a large majority of both the clergy and the noblesse insist with pertinacity on the three separate chambers, since, united, they would neutralize the third estate. If the deputies prevailed, they would inaugurate reforms to which the other orders would never consent.

Long did these different bodies of the States-General deliberate, and stormy were the debates. The nobles showed themselves haughty and dogmatical; the deputies showed themselves aggressive and revolutionary. The King and the ministers looked on with impatience and disgust, but were irresolute. Had the King been a Cromwell, or a Napoleon, he would have dissolved the assemblies; but he was timid and hesitating. Necker, the prime-minister, was for compromise; he would accept reforms, but only in a constitutional way.

The knot was at last cut by the Abbé Siéyes, a political priest, and one of the deputies for Paris,— the finest intellect in the body, next to Mirabeau, and

at first more influential than he, since the Count was generally distrusted on account of his vices. Nor had he as yet exhibited his great powers. Sièyes said, for the Deputies alone, "We represent ninety-six per cent of the whole nation. The people is sovereign; we, therefore, as its representatives, constitute ourselves a national assembly." His motion was passed by acclamation, on June 17, and the Third Estate assumed the right to act for France.

In a legal and constitutional point of view, this was a usurpation, if ever there was one. "It was," says Von Sybel, the able German historian of the French Revolution, "a declaration of open war between arbitrary principles and existing rights." It was as if the House of Representatives in the United States, or the House of Commons in England, should declare themselves the representatives of the nation, ignoring the Senate or the House of Lords. Its logical sequence was revolution.

The prodigious importance of this step cannot be overrated. It transferred the powers of the monarchy to the Third Estate. It would logically lead to other usurpations, the subversion of the throne, and the utter destruction of feudalism, — for this last was the aim of the reformers. Mirabeau himself at first shrank from this violent measure, but finally adopted it. He detested feudalism and the privileges of the clergy. He

wanted radical reforms, but would have preferred to gain them in a constitutional way, like Pym, in the English Revolution. But if reforms could not be gained constitutionally, then he would accept revolution, as the lesser evil. Constitutionally, radical reforms were hopeless. The ministers and the King, doubtless, would have made some concessions, but not enough to satisfy the deputies. So these same deputies took the entire work of legislation into their own hands. They constituted themselves the sole representatives of the nation. The nobles and the clergy might indeed deliberate with them; they were not altogether ignored, but their interests and rights were to be disregarded. In that state of ferment and discontent which existed when the States-General was convened, the nobles and the clergy probably knew the spirit of the deputies, and therefore refused to sit with them. They knew, from the innumerable pamphlets and tracts which were issued from the press, that radical changes were desired, to which they themselves were opposed; and they had the moral support of the Government on their side.

The deputies of the Third Estate were bent on the destruction of feudalism, as the only way to remedy the national evils, which were so glaring and overwhelming. They probably knew that their proceedings were unconstitutional and illegal, but thought that their acts would

be sanctioned by their patriotic intentions. They were resolved to secure what seemed to them rights, and thought little of duties. If these inestimable and vital rights should be granted without usurpation, they would be satisfied; if not, then they would resort to usurpation. To them their course seemed to be dictated by the "higher law." What to them were legalities that perpetuated wrongs? The constitution was made for man, not man for the constitution.

Had the three orders deliberated together in one hall, although against precedent and legality, the course of revolution might have been directed into a different channel; or if an able and resolute king had been on the throne, he might have united with the people against the nobles, and secured all the reforms that were imperative, without invoking revolution; or he might have dispersed the deputies at the point of the bayonet, and raised taxes by arbitrary imposition, as able despots have ever done. We cannot penetrate the secrets of Providence. It may have been ordered in divine justice and wisdom that the French people should work out their own deliverance in their own way, in mistakes, in suffering, and in violence, and point the eternal moral that inexperience, vanity, and ignorance are fatal to sound legislation, and sure to lead to errors which prove disastrous; that national progress is incompatible with crime; that evils can

only gradually be removed; that wickedness ends in violence.

A majority of the deputies meant well. They were earnest, patriotic, and enthusiastic. But they knew nothing of the science of government or of constitution-making, which demand the highest maturity of experience and wisdom. As I have said, nearly four hundred of them were country lawyers, as conceited as they were inexperienced. Both Mirabeau and Sièyes had a supreme contempt for them as a whole. They wanted what they called rights, and were determined to get them any way they could, disregarding obstacles, disregarding forms and precedents. And they were backed up and urged forward by ignorant mobs, and wicked demagogues who hated the throne, the clergy, and the nobles. Hence the deputies made mistakes. They could see nothing better than unscrupulous destruction. And they did not know how to reconstruct. They were bewildered and embarrassed, and listened to the orators of the Palais Royal.

The first thing of note which occurred when they resolved to call themselves the National Assembly and not the Third Estate, which they were only, was done by Mirabeau. He ascended the tribune, when Brézé, the master of ceremonies, came with a message from the King for them to join the other orders, and said in his voice of melodious thunder, "We are here by the com-

mand of the people, and will only disperse by the force of bayonets." From that moment, till his death, he ruled the Assembly. The disconcerted messenger returned to his sovereign. What did the King say at this defiance of royal authority? Did he rise in wrath and indignation, and order his guards to disperse the rebels? No; the amiable King said meekly, "Well, let them remain there." What a king for such stormy times! O shade of Richelieu, thy work has perished! Rousseau, a greater genius than thou wert, hath undermined the institutions and the despotism of two hundred years.

Only two courses were now open to the King, — this weak and kind-hearted Louis XVI., heir of a hundred years' misrule, — if he would maintain his power. One was to join the reformers and co-operate in patriotic work, assisted by progressive ministers, whatever opposition might be raised by nobles and priests; and the second was to arm himself and put down the deputies. But how could this weak-minded sovereign co-operate with plebeians against the orders which sustained his throne? And if he used violence, he inaugurated civil war, which would destroy thousands where revolution destroyed hundreds. Moreover, the example of Charles I. was before him. He dared not run the risk. In such a torrent of revolutionary forces, when even regular troops fraternized with citizens, that

experiment was dangerous. And then he was tender-hearted, and shrank from shedding innocent blood. His queen, Marie Antoinette, the intrepid daughter of Maria Theresa, with her Austrian proclivities, would have kept him firm and sustained him by her courageous counsels; but her influence was neutralized by popular ministers. Necker, the prosperous banker, the fortunate financier, advised half measures. Had he conciliated Mirabeau, who led the Assembly, then even the throne might have been saved. But he detested and mistrusted the mighty tribune of the people, — the aristocratic demagogue, who, in spite of his political rancor and incendiary tracts, was the only great statesman of the day. He refused the aid of the only man who could have staved off the violence of factions, and brought reason and talent to the support of reform and law.

At this period, after the triumph of the Third Estate, — now called the National Assembly, — and the paralysis of the Court, perplexed and uncertain whether or not to employ violence and disband the assembly by royal decree, a great agitation began among the people, not merely in Paris, but over the whole kingdom. There were meetings to promote insurrection, paid declaimers of human rights, speeches without end in the gardens of the Palais Royal, where Marat, Camille Desmoulins, and other popular orators harangued the excited crowds. There were insurrections

at Versailles, which was filled with foreign soldiers. The French guards fraternized with the people whom they were to subdue. Necker in despair resigned, or was dismissed. None of the authorities could command obedience. The people were starving, and the bakers' shops were pillaged. The crowds broke open the prisons, and released many who had been summarily confined. Troops were poured into Paris, and the old Duke of Broglie, one of the heroes of the Seven Years' War, now war-minister, sought to overawe the city. The gun-shops were plundered, and the rabble armed themselves with whatever weapons they could lay their hands upon. The National Assembly decreed the formation of a national guard to quell disturbances, and placed Lafayette at the head of it. Besenval, who commanded the royal troops, was forced to withdraw from the capital. The city was completely in the hands of the insurgents, who were driven hither and thither by every passion which can sway the human soul. Patriotic zeal blended with envy, hatred, malice, revenge, and avarice. The mob at last attacked the Bastille, a formidable fortress where state-prisoners were arbitrarily confined. In spite of moats and walls and guns, this gloomy monument of royal tyranny was easily taken, for it was manned by only about one hundred and forty men, and had as provisions only two sacks of flour. No aid could possibly come to the rescue.

Resistance was impossible, in its unprepared state for defence, although its guns, if properly manned, might have demolished the whole Faubourg Saint-Antoine.

The news of the fall of this fortress came like a thunder-clap over Europe. It announced the reign of anarchy in France, and the helplessness of the King. On hearing of the fall of the Bastille, the King is said to have exclaimed to his courtiers, "It is a revolt, then." "Nay, sire," said the Duke of Liancourt, "it is a revolution." It was evident that even then the King did not comprehend the situation. But how few could comprehend it! Only one man saw the full tendency of things, and shuddered at the consequences, — and this man was Mirabeau.

The King, at last aroused, appeared in person in the National Assembly, and announced the withdrawal of the troops from Paris and the recall of Necker. But general mistrust was alive in every bosom, and disorders still continued to a frightful extent, even in the provinces. "In Brittany the towns appointed new municipalities, and armed a civic guard from the royal magazines. In Caen the people stormed the citadel and killed the officers of the salt-tax. Nowhere were royal intendants seen. The custom-houses, at the gates of the provincial cities, were demolished. In Franche-Comté a noble castle was burned every day. All kinds of property were exposed to the most shameful robbery."

Then took place the emigration of the nobles, among whom were Condé, Polignac, Broglie, to organize resistance to the revolution which had already conquered the King.

Meanwhile, the triumphant Assembly, largely recruited by the liberal nobles and the clergy, continued its sessions, decreed its sittings permanent and its members inviolable. The sittings were stormy; for everybody made speeches, written or oral, yet few had any power of debate. Even Mirabeau himself, before whom all succumbed, was deficient in this talent. He could thunder; he could arouse or allay passions; he seemed able to grasp every subject, for he used other people's brains; he was an incarnation of eloquence, — but he could not reply to opponents with much effect, like Pitt, Webster, and Gladstone. He was still the leading man in the kingdom; all eyes were directed towards him; and no one could compete with him, not even Sièyes. The Assembly wasted days in foolish debates. It had begun its proceedings with the famous declaration of the rights of man, — an abstract question, first mooted by Rousseau, and re-echoed by Jefferson. Mirabeau was appointed with a committee of five to draft the declaration, — in one sense, a puerile fiction, since men are not "born free," but in a state of dependence and weakness; nor "equal," either in regard to fortune, or talents, or virtue, or rank: but in another sense a great truth, so far as

men are entitled by nature to equal privileges, and freedom of the person, and unrestricted liberty to get a living according to their choice.

The Assembly at last set itself in earnest to the work of legislation. In one night, the ever memorable 4th of August, it decreed the total abolition of feudalism. In one night it abolished tithes to the church, provincial privileges, feudal rights, serfdom, the law of primogeniture, seigniorial dues, and the *gabelle*, or tax on salt. Mirabeau was not present, being absent on his pleasures. These, however, seldom interfered with his labors, which were herculean, from seven in the morning till eleven at night. He had two sides to his character, — one exciting abhorrence and disgust, for his pleasures were miscellaneous and coarse; a man truly abandoned to the most violent passions: the other side pleasing, exciting admiration; a man with an enormous power of work, affable, dignified, with courtly manners, and enchanting conversation, making friends with everybody, out of real kindness of heart, because he really loved the people, and sought their highest good; a truly patriotic man, and as wise as he was enthusiastic. This great orator and statesman was outraged and alarmed at the indecent haste of the Assembly, and stigmatized its proceedings as "nocturnal orgies." The Assembly on that memorable night swept away the whole feudal edifice, and in less time than the English Parliament

would take to decide upon the first reading of any bill of importance.

The following day brought reflection and discontent. "That is just the character of our Frenchmen," exclaimed Mirabeau; "they are three months disputing about syllables, and in a single night they overturn the whole venerable edifice of the monarchy." Sièyes was equally disgusted, and made a speech of great force to show that to abolish tithes without an indemnity was spoliating the clergy to enrich the land-owners. He concluded, "You know how to be free; you do not know how to be just." But he was regarded as an ecclesiastic, unable to forego his personal interests. He gave vent to his irritated feelings in a conversation with Mirabeau, when the latter said, "My dear Abbé, you have let loose the bull, and you now complain that he gores you." It was this political priest who had made the first assault on the constitution, when he urged the Third Estate to decree itself the nation.

The National Assembly had destroyed feudal institutions; but it had not yet made a constitution, or restored order. Violence and anarchy still reigned. Then the clubs began to make themselves a power. "Come," said the lawyer Danton to a friend, in the district of the Cordéliers, "come and howl with us; you will earn much money, and you can still choose your party afterwards." But it was in the garden of the

Palais Royal, and in the old church of the Jacobins that the most violent attacks were made on all existing institutions. "A Fourth Estate (of able editors) also springs up, increases, multiplies; irrepressible, incalculable." Then from the lowest quarters of Paris surge up an insurrection of women, who march to Versailles in disorder, penetrate the Assembly, and invade the palace. On the 5th of October a mob joins them, of the lowest rabble, and succeed in forcing their way into the precincts of the palace. "The King to Paris!" was now the general cry, and Louis XVI. appears upon the balcony and announces by gestures his subjection to their will. A few hours after, the King is on his way to Paris, under the protection of the National Guard, really a prisoner in the hands of the people. In fourteen days the National Assembly also follows, to be now dictated to by the clubs.

In this state of anarchy and incipient violence, Mirabeau, whose power in the Assembly was still unimpaired, wished to halt. He foresaw the future. No man in France had such clear insight and sagacity as he. He saw the State drifting into dissolution, and put forth his hand and raised his voice to arrest the catastrophe which he lamented. "The mob of Paris," said he, "will scourge the corpses of the King and Queen." It was then that he gave but feeble support to the "Rights of Man," and contended for the unlimited veto

of the King on the proceedings of the Assembly. He also brought forward a motion to allow the King's ministers to take part in the debates. "On the 7th of October he exhorted the Count de Marck to tell the King that his throne and kingdom were lost, if he did not immediately quit Paris." And he did all he could to induce him, through the voice of his friends, to identify himself with the cause of reform, as the only means for the salvation of the throne. He warned him against fleeing to the frontier to join the emigrants, as the prelude of civil war. He advocated a new ministry, of more vigor and breadth. He wanted a government both popular and strong. He wished to retain the monarchy, but desired a constitutional monarchy like that of England. His hostility to all feudal institutions was intense, and he did not seek to have any of them restored. It was the abolition of feudal privileges which was really the permanent bequest of the French Revolution. They have never been revived. No succeeding government has even attempted to revive them.

On the removal of the National Assembly to Paris, Mirabeau took a large house and lived ostentatiously and at great expense until he died, from which it is supposed that he received pensions from England, Spain, and even the French Court. This is intimated by Dumont; and I think it probable. It will in part

account for the conservative course he adopted to check the excesses of that revolution which he, more than any other man, invoked. He was doubtless patriotic, and uttered his warning protests with sincerity. Still it is easy to believe that so corrupt and extravagant a man in his private life was accessible to bribery. Such a man must have money, and he was willing to get it from any quarter. It is certain that he was regarded by the royal family, towards the close of his career, very differently from what they regarded him when the States-General was assembled. But if he was paid by different courts, it is true that he then gave his support to the cause of law and constitutional liberty, and doubtless loathed the excesses which took place in the name of liberty. He was the only man who could have saved the monarchy, if it were possible to save it; but no human force could probably have arrested the waves of revolutionary frenzy at this time.

On the removal of the Assembly to Paris, the all-absorbing questions related to finance. The State was bankrupt. It was difficult to raise money for the most pressing exigencies. Money must be had, or there would be universal anarchy and despair. How could it be raised? The credit of the country was gone, and all means of taxation were exhausted. No man in France had such a horror of bankruptcy as Mirabeau, and his eloquence was never more convincing and

commanding than in his finance speeches. Nobody could reply to him. The Assembly was completely subjugated by his commanding talents. Nor was his influence ever greater than when he supported Necker's proposal for a patriotic loan, a sort of income-tax, in a masterly speech which excited universal admiration. "Ah, Monsieur le Comte," said a great actor to him on that occasion, "what a speech! and with what an accent did you deliver it! You have surely missed your vocation."

But the finances were in a hopeless state. With credit gone, taxation exhausted, and a continually increasing floating debt, the situation was truly appalling to any statesman. It was at this juncture that Talleyrand, a priest of noble birth, as able as he was unscrupulous, brought forth his famous measure for the spoliation of the Church, to which body he belonged, and to which he was a disgrace. Talleyrand, as Bishop of Autun, had been one of the original representatives of the clergy on the first convocation of the States-General; he had advocated combining with the Third Estate when they pronounced themselves the National Assembly, had himself joined the Assembly, attracted notice by his speeches, been appointed to draw up a constitution, taken active part in the declaration of Rights, and made himself generally conspicuous and efficient. At the present apparently hopeless financial

crisis, Talleyrand uncovered a new source of revenue, claimed that the property of the Church belonged to the nation, and that as the nation was on the brink of financial ruin, this confiscation was a supreme necessity. The Church lands represented a value of two thousand millions of francs, — an immense sum, which, if sold, would relieve, it was supposed, the necessities of the State. Mirabeau, although he was no friend of the clergy, shrank from such a monstrous injustice, and said that such a wound as this would prove the most poisonous which the country had received. But such was the urgent need of money, that the Assembly on the 2d of November, 1789, decreed that the property of the Church should be put at the disposal of the State. On the 19th of December it was decreed that these lands should be sold. The clergy raised the most piteous cries of grief and indignation. Vainly did the bishops offer four hundred millions as a gift to the nation. It was like the offer of Darius to Alexander, of one hundred thousand talents. "Your whole property is mine," said the conqueror; "your kingdom is mine."

So the offer of the bishops was rejected, and their whole property was taken. And it was taken under the sophistical plea that it belonged to the nation. It was really the gift of various benefactors in different ages to the Church, for pious purposes, and had been universally recognized as sacred. It was as sacred as any other

rights of property. The spoliation was infinitely worse than the suppression of the monasteries by Henry VIII. He had some excuse, since they had become a scandal, had misused their wealth, and diverted it from the purposes originally intended. The only wholesale attack on property by the State which can be compared with it, was the abolition of slavery by a stroke of the pen in the American Rebellion. But this was a war measure, when the country was in most imminent peril; and it was also a moral measure in behalf of philanthropy. The spoliation of the clergy by the National Assembly was a great injustice, since it was not urged that the clergy had misused their wealth, or were neglectful of their duties, as the English monks were in the time of Henry VIII. This Church property had been held so sacred, that Louis XIV. in his greatest necessities never presumed to appropriate any part of it. The sophistry that it belonged to the nation, and therefore that the representatives of the nation had a right to take it, probably deceived nobody. It was necessary to give some excuse or reason for such a wholesale robbery, and this was the best which could be invented. The simple truth was that money at this juncture was a supreme necessity to the State, and this spoliation seemed the easiest way to meet the public wants. Like most of the legislation of the Assembly, it was defended on the Jesuit plea of expediency,—that the end justifies

the means; the plea of unscrupulous and wicked politicians in all countries.

And this expediency, doubtless, relieved the government for a time, for the government was in the hands of the Assembly. Royal authority was a mere shadow. In reality, the King was a prisoner, guarded by Lafayette, in the palace of the Tuileries. And the Assembly itself was now in fear of the people as represented by the clubs. There were two hundred Jacobin clubs in Paris and other cities at this time, howling their vituperations not only on royalty but also on everything else which was not already destroyed.

The Assembly having provided for the wants of the government by the confiscation of two thousand millions, — which, however, when sold, did not realize half that sum, — issued their *assignats*, or bonds representing parcels of land assigned to redeem them. These were mostly 100-franc notes, though there were also issues of ten and even five francs. The national credit was thus patched up by legislators who took a constitution in hand, — to quote Burke — "as savages would a looking-glass." Then they proceeded to other reforms, and abolished the parliaments, and instituted the election of judges by the people, thus stripping the King of his few remaining powers.

In the mean time Mirabeau died, worn out with labors and passions, and some say by poison. Even this

Hercules could not resist the consequences of violated natural law. The Assembly decreed a magnificent public funeral, and buried him with great pomp. He was the first to be interred in the Pantheon. For nearly two years he was the leading man in France, and he retained his influence in the Assembly to the end. Nor did he lose his popularity with the people. It is not probable that his intrigues to save the monarchy were known, except to a few confidential friends. He died at the right time for his fame, in April, 1791. Had he lived, he could not have arrested the tide of revolutionary excesses and the reign of demagogues, and probably would have been one of the victims of the guillotine.

As an author Mirabeau does not rank high. His fame rests on his speeches. His eloquence was transcendent, so far as it was rendered vivid by passion. He knew how to move men; he understood human nature. No orator ever did so much by a single word, by felicitous expressions. In the tribune he was immovable. His self-possession never left him in the greatest disorders. He was always master of himself. His voice was full, manly, and sonorous, and pleased the ear; always powerful, yet flexible, it could be as distinctly heard when he lowered it as when he raised it. His knowledge was not remarkable, but he had an almost miraculous faculty of appropriating whatever he

heard. He paid the greatest attention to his dress, and wore an enormous quantity of hair dressed in the fashion of the day. "When I shake my terrible locks," said he, "no one dares interrupt me." Though he received pensions, he was too proud to be dishonest, in the ordinary sense. He received large sums, but died insolvent. He had, like most Frenchmen, an inordinate vanity, and loved incense from all ranks and conditions. Although he was the first to support the Assembly against the King, he was essentially in favor of monarchy, and maintained the necessity of the absolute veto. He would have given a constitution to his country as nearly resembling that of England as local circumstances would permit. Had he lived, the destinies of France might have been different.

But his death gave courage to all the factions, and violence and crime were consummated by the Reign of Terror. With the death of Mirabeau, closed the first epoch of the Revolution. Thus far it had been earnest, but unscrupulous in the violation of rights and in the destruction of ancient abuses. Yet if inexperienced and rash, it was not marked by deeds of blood. In this first form it was marked by enthusiasm and hope and patriotic zeal; not, as afterwards, by fears and cruelty and usurpations.

Henceforth, the Revolution took another turn. It was directed, not by men of genius, not by reformers

seeking to rule by wisdom, but by demagogues and Jacobin clubs, and the mobs of the city of Paris. What was called the "Left," in the meetings of the Assembly, — made up of fanatics whom Mirabeau despised and detested, — gained a complete ascendency and adopted the extremest measures. Under their guidance, the destruction of the monarchy was complete. Feudalism and the Church property had been swept away, and the royal authority now received its final blow; nay, the King himself was slain, under the influence of fear, it is true, but accompanied by acts of cruelty and madness which shocked the whole civilized world and gave an eternal stain to the Revolution itself.

It was not now reform, but unscrupulous destruction and violence which marked the Assembly, controlled as it was by Jacobin orators and infidel demagogues. A frenzy seized the nation. It feared reactionary movements and the interference of foreign powers. When the Bastille had fallen, it was by the hands of half-starved people clamoring for bread; but when the monarchy was attacked, it was from sentiments of fear among those who had the direction of affairs. The King, at last, alarmed for his own safety, contrived to escape from the Tuileries, where he was virtually under arrest, for his power was gone; but he was recaptured, and brought back to Paris, a prisoner. Robespierre called

upon the Assembly to bring the King and Queen to trial. Marat proposed a military dictatorship, to act more summarily, which proposal produced a temporary reaction in favor of royalty. Lafayette, as commander of the National Guard, declared, "If you kill the King to-day, I will place the Dauphin on the throne to-morrow." But the republican party, now in fear of a reaction, was increasing rapidly. Its leaders were at this time the Girondists, bent on the suppression of royalty, and headed by Brissot, who agitated France by his writings in favor of a republic, while Madame Roland opened her *salons* for intrigues and cabals, — a bright woman, "who dreamed of Spartan severity, Roman virtue, and Plutarch heroes."

The National Assembly dissolved itself in September, and appealed to the country for the election of a National Convention; for, the King having been formally suspended Aug. 10, there was no government. The first act of the Convention was to proclaim the Republic. Then occurred the more complete organization of the Jacobin club, to control the National Convention; and this was followed by the rapid depreciation of the *assignats*, bread-riots, and all sorts of disturbances. Added to these evils, foreign governments were arming to suppress the Revolution, and war had been declared by the Girondist ministry, of which Dumouriez was war-minister. At this crisis, Danton, of the club of the

Cordéliers, who found the Jacobins too respectable, became a power, — a coarse, vulgar man, but of indefatigable energy and activity, who wished to do away with all order and responsibility. He attacked the Gironde as not sufficiently violent.

It was now war between the different sections of the revolutionists themselves. Lafayette resolved to suppress the dangerous radicals by force, but found it no easy thing, for the Convention was controlled by men of violence, who filled the country with alarm, not of their unscrupulous measures, but of the military and of foreign enemies. He even narrowly escaped impeachment at the hands of the National Convention.

The Convention is now overawed and controlled by the Commune and the clubs. Lafayette flies. The mob rules Paris. The revolutionary tribunal is decreed. Robespierre, Marat, and Danton form a triumvirate of power. The September massacres take place. The Girondists become conservative, and attempt to stay the progress of further excesses, — all to no purpose, for the King himself is now impeached, and the Jacobins control everything. The King is led to the bar of the Convention. He is condemned by a majority only of one, and immured in the Temple. On the 20th of January, 1793, he was condemned, and the next day he mounted the scaffold. "We have burned our ships," said Marat when the tragedy was consummated.

With the death of the King, I bring this lecture to a close. It would be interesting to speculate on what might have been averted, had Mirabeau lived. But probably nothing could have saved the monarchy except civil war, to which Louis XVI. was averse.

Nor can I dwell on the second part of the Revolution, when the government was in the hands of those fiends and fanatics who turned France into one vast slaughter-house of butchery and blood. I have only to say, that the same unseen hand which humiliated the nobles, impoverished the clergy, and destroyed the King, also visited with retribution those monsters who had a leading hand in the work of destruction. Marat, the infidel journalist, was stabbed by Charlotte Corday. Danton, the minister of justice and orator of the revolutionary clubs, was executed on the scaffold he had erected for so many innocent men. Robespierre, the sentimental murderer and arch-conspirator, also expiated his crimes on the scaffold; as did Saint-Just, Lebas, Couthon, Henriot, and other legalized assassins. As the Girondists sacrificed the royal family, so did the Jacobins sacrifice the Girondists; and the Convention, filled with consternation, again sacrificed the Jacobins.

After the work of destruction was consummated, and there was nothing more to destroy, and starvation was imminent at Paris, and general detestation began to

prevail, in view of the atrocities committed in the name of liberty, the crushing fact became apparent that the nations of Europe were arming to put down the Revolution and restore the monarchy. In a generous paroxysm of patriotism, the whole nation armed to resist the invaders and defend the ideas of the Revolution. The Convention also perceived, too late, that anything was better than anarchy and license. It put down the clubs, restored religious worship, destroyed the busts of the monsters who had disgraced their cause and country, intrusted supreme power to five Directors, able and patriotic, and dissolved itself.

Under the Directory, the third act of the drama of revolution opened with the gallant resistance which France made to the invaders of her soil and the enemies of her liberties. This resistance brought out the marvellous military genius of Napoleon, who intoxicated the nation by his victories, and who, in reward of his extraordinary services, was made First Consul, with dictatorial powers. The abuse of these powers, his usurpation of imperial dignity, the wars into which he was drawn to maintain his ascendency, and his final defeat at Waterloo, constitute the most brilliant chapter in the history of modern times. The Revolution was succeeded by military despotism. Inexperience led to fatal mistakes, and these mistakes made the strong government of a single man a necessity. The Revolution began in

noble aspirations, but for lack of political wisdom and sound principles in religion and government, it ended in anarchy and crime, and was again followed by the tyranny of a monarch. This is the sequence of all revolutions which defy eternal justice and human experience. There are few evils which are absolutely unendurable, and permanent reforms are only obtained by patience and wisdom. Violence is ever succeeded by usurpation. The terrible wars through which France passed, to aggrandize an ambitious and selfish egotist, were attended with far greater evils than those which the nation sought to abolish when the States-General first met at Versailles.

But the experiment of liberty, though it failed, was not altogether thrown away. Lessons of political wisdom were learned, which no nation will ever forget. Some great rights of immense value were secured, and many grievous privileges passed away forever. Neither Louis XVIII., nor Charles X., nor Louis Philippe, nor Louis Napoleon, ever attempted to restore feudalism, or unequal privileges, or arbitrary taxation. The legislative power never again completely succumbed to the decrees of royal and imperial tyrants. The sovereignty of the people was established as one of the fixed ideas of the nineteenth century, and the representatives of the people are now the supreme rulers of the land. A man can now rise in France above the condition in

which he was born, and can aspire to any office and position which are bestowed on talents and genius. Bastilles and *lettres de cachet* have become an impossibility. Religious toleration is as free there as in England or the United States. Education is open to the poor, and is encouraged by the Government. Constitutional government seems to be established, under whatever name the executive may be called. France is again one of the most prosperous and contented countries of Europe; and the only great drawback to her national prosperity is that which also prevents other Continental powers from developing their resources, — the large standing army which she feels it imperative to sustain.

In view of the inexperience and fanaticism of the revolutionists, and the dreadful evils which took place after the fall of the monarchy, we should say that the Revolution was premature, and that substantial reforms might have been gained without violence. But this is a mere speculation. One thing we do know, — that the Revolution was a national uprising against injustice and oppression. When the torch is applied to a venerable edifice, we cannot determine the extent of the conflagration, or the course which it will take. The French Revolution was plainly one of the developments of a nation's progress. To conservative and reverential minds it was a horrid form for progress to take, since it was

visionary and infidel. But all nations are in the hands of God, who is above all second causes. And I know of no modern movement to which the words of Carlyle, when he was an optimist, when he wrote the most original and profound of his works, the "Sartor Resartus," apply with more force: "When the Phœnix is fanning her funeral pyre, will there not be sparks flying? Alas! some millions of men have been sucked into that high eddying flame, and like moths consumed. In the burning of the world-Phœnix, destruction and creation proceed together; and as the ashes of the old are blown about do new forces mysteriously spin themselves, and melodious death-songs are succeeded by more melodious birth-songs."

Yet all progress is slow, especially in government and morals. And how forcibly are we impressed, in surveying the varied phases of the French Revolution, that nothing but justice and right should guide men in their reforms; that robbery and injustice in the name of liberty and progress are still robbery and injustice, to be visited with righteous retribution; and that those rulers and legislators who cannot make passions and interests subservient to reason, are not fit for the work assigned to them. It is miserable hypocrisy and cant to talk of a revolutionary necessity for violating the first principles of human society. Ah! it is Reason, Intelligence, and Duty, calm as the voices of angels,

soothing as the "music of the spheres," which alone should guide nations, in all crises and difficulties, to the attainment of those rights and privileges on which all true progress is based.

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XLVI.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION.

A. D. 1757–1804.

XLVI.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION.

THERE is one man in the political history of the United States whom Daniel Webster regarded as his intellectual superior. And this man was Alexander Hamilton; not so great a lawyer or orator as Webster, not so broad and experienced a statesman, but a more original genius, who gave shape to existing political institutions. And he rendered transcendent services at a great crisis of American history, and died, with no decline of popularity, in the prime of his life, like Canning in England, with a brilliant future before him. He was one of those fixed stars which will forever blaze in the firmament of American lights, like Franklin, Washington, and Jefferson; and the more his works are critically examined, the brighter does his genius appear. No matter how great this country is destined to be, — no matter what illustrious statesmen are destined to arise, and work in a larger sphere with the eyes of the world upon them, — Alexander Hamil-

ton will be remembered and will be famous for laying one of the corner-stones in the foundation of the American structure.

He was not born on American soil, but on the small West India Island of Nevis. His father was a broken-down Scotch merchant, and his mother was a bright and gifted French lady, of Huguenot descent. The Scotch and French blood blended, is a good mixture in a country made up of all the European nations. But Hamilton, if not an American by birth, was American in his education and sympathies and surroundings, and ultimately married into a distinguished American family of Dutch descent. At the age of twelve he was placed in the counting-house of a wealthy American merchant, where his marked ability made him friends, and he was sent to the United States to be educated. As a boy he was precocious, like Cicero and Bacon; and the boy was father of the man, since politics formed one of his earliest studies. Such a precocious politician was he while a student in King's College, now Columbia, in New York, that at the age of seventeen he entered into all the controversies of the day, and wrote essays which, published over the signature of "A Westchester Farmer," were attributed to Dr. Cooper, the president of the college, and to Governor Livingston. As a college boy he took part in public political discussions on those great questions which employed

the genius of Burke, and occupied the attention of the leading men of America.

This was at the period when the colonies had not actually rebelled, but when they meditated resistance, — during the years between 1773 and 1776, when the whole country was agitated by political tracts, indignation meetings, patriotic sermons, and preparations for military struggle. Hitherto the colonies had not been oppressed; they had most of the rights and privileges they desired; but they feared that their liberties — so precious to them, and which they had virtually enjoyed from their earliest settlements — were in danger of being wrested away. And their fears were succeeded by indignation when the Coercion Act was passed by the English parliament, and when it was resolved to tax them without their consent, and without a representation of their interests. Nor did they desire war, nor even, at first, entire separation from the Mother Country; but they were ready to accept war rather than to submit to injustice, or any curtailment of their liberties. They had always enjoyed self-government in such vital matters as schools, municipal and local laws, taxes, colonial judges, and unrestricted town-meetings. These privileges the Americans resolved at all hazard to keep: some, because they had been accustomed to them all their days; others, from the abstract idea of freedom which Rousseau had in-

culcated with so much eloquence, which fascinated such men as Franklin and Jefferson; and others again, from the deep conviction that the colonies were strong enough to cope successfully with any forces that England could then command, should coercion be attempted, — to which latter class Washington, Pinckney, and Jay belonged; men of aristocratic sympathies, but intensely American. It was no democratic struggle to enlarge the franchise, and realize Rousseau's idea of fraternity and equality, — an idea of blended socialism, infidelity, and discontent, — which united the colonies in resistance; but a broad, noble, patriotic desire, first, to conserve the rights of free English colonists, and finally to make America independent of all foreign forces, combined with a lofty faith in their own resources for success, however desperate the struggle might be.

All parties now wanted independence, to possess a country of their own, free of English shackles. They got tired of signing petitions, of being mere colonists. So they sent delegates to Philadelphia to deliberate on their difficulties and aspirations; and on July 4, 1776, these delegates issued the Declaration of Independence, penned by Jefferson, one of the noblest documents ever written by the hand of man, the Magna Charta of American liberties, in which are asserted the great rights of mankind, — that all men have the right to seek happiness in their own way, and are entitled to the

fruit of their labors; and that the people are the source of power, and belong to themselves, and not to kings, or nobles, or priests.

In signing this document the Revolutionary patriots knew that it meant war; and soon the struggle came, — one of the inevitable and foreordained events of history, — when Hamilton was still a college student. He was eighteen when the battle of Lexington was fought; and he lost no time in joining the volunteers. Dearborn and Stark from New Hampshire, Putnam and Arnold from Connecticut, and Greene from Rhode Island, all now resolved on independence, "liberty or death." Hamilton left his college walls to join a volunteer regiment of artillery, of which he soon became captain, from his knowledge of military science which he had been studying in anticipation of the contest. In this capacity he was engaged in the battle of White Plains, the passage of the Raritan, and the battles at Princeton and Trenton.

When the army encamped at Morristown, in the gloomy winter of 1776–1777, his great abilities having been detected by the commander-in-chief, he was placed upon Washington's staff, as aid-de-camp with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, — a great honor for a boy of nineteen. Yet he was not thus honored and promoted on account of remarkable military abilities, although, had he continued in active service, he would probably have

distinguished himself as a general, for he had courage, energy, and decision; but he was selected by Washington on account of his marvellous intellectual powers. So, half aid and half secretary, he became at once the confidential adviser of the General, and was employed by him not only in his multitudinous correspondence, but in difficult negotiations, and in those delicate duties which required discretion and tact. He had those qualities which secured confidence, — integrity, diligence, fidelity, and a premature wisdom. He had brains and all those resources which would make him useful to his country. Many there were who could fight as well as he, but there were few who had those high qualities on which the success of a campaign depended. Thus he was sent to the camp of General Gates at Albany to demand the division of his forces and the reinforcement of the commander-in-chief, which Gates was very unwilling to accede to, for the capture of Burgoyne had turned his head. He was then the most popular officer of the army, and even aspired to the chief command. So he was inclined to evade the orders of his superior, under the plea of military necessity. It required great tact in a young man to persuade an ambitious general to diminish his own authority; but Hamilton was successful in his mission, and won the admiration of Washington for his adroit management. He was also very useful in the most critical period of the

war in ferreting out conspiracies, cabals, and intrigues; for such there were, even against Washington, whose transcendent wisdom and patriotism were not then appreciated as they were afterwards.

The military services of Hamilton were concealed from the common eye, and lay chiefly in his sage counsels; for, young as he was, he had more intellect and sagacity than any man in the army. It was Hamilton who urged decisive measures in that campaign which was nearly blasted by the egotism and disobedience of Lee. It was Hamilton who was sent to the French admiral to devise a co-operation of forces, and to the headquarters of the English to negotiate for an exchange of prisoners. It was Hamilton who dissuaded Washington from seizing the person of Sir Harry Clinton, the English commander in New York, when he had the opportunity. "Have you considered the consequences of seizing the General?" said the aid. "What would these be?" inquired Washington. "Why," replied Hamilton, "we should lose more than we should gain; since we perfectly understand his plans, and by taking him off, we should make way for an abler man, whose dispositions we have yet to learn." Such was the astuteness which Hamilton early displayed, so that he really rendered great military services, without commanding on the field.

When quite a young man he was incidentally of great use in suggesting to influential members of Congress certain financial measures which were the germ of that fiscal policy which afterwards made him immortal as Secretary of the Treasury; for it was in finance that his genius shone out with the brightest lustre. It was while he was the aid and secretary of Washington that he also unfolded, in a letter to Judge Duane, those principles of government which were afterwards developed in "The Federalist." He had "already formed comprehensive opinions on the situation and wants of the infant States, and had wrought out for himself a political system far in advance of the conceptions of his contemporaries." It was by his opinions on the necessities and wants of the country, and the way to meet them, that his extraordinary genius was not only seen, but was made useful to those in power. His brain was too active and prolific to be confined to the details of military service; he entered into a discussion of all those great questions which formed the early constitutional history of the United States, — all the more remarkable because he was so young. In fact he never was a boy; he was a man before he was seventeen. His ability was surpassed only by his precocity. No man saw the evils of the day so clearly as he, or suggested such wise remedies as he did when he was in the family of Washington.

We are apt to suppose that it was all plain sailing after the colonies had declared their independence, and their armies were marshalled under the greatest man — certainly the wisest and best — in the history of America and of the eighteenth century. But the difficulties were appalling even to the stoutest heart. In less than two years after the battle of Bunker Hill popular enthusiasm had almost fled, although the leaders never lost hope of ultimate success. The characters of the leading generals were maligned, even that of the general-in-chief; trade and all industries were paralyzed; the credit of the States was at the lowest ebb; there were universal discontents; there were unforseen difficulties which had never been anticipated; Congress was nearly powerless, a sort of advisory board rather than a legislature; the States were jealous of Congress and of each other; there was a general demoralization; there was really no central power strong enough to enforce the most excellent measures; the people were poor; demagogues sowed suspicion and distrust; labor was difficult to procure; the agricultural population was decimated; there was no commerce; people lived on salted meats, dried fish, baked beans, and brown bread; all foreign commodities were fabulously dear; there was universal hardship and distress; and all these evils were endured amid foreign contempt and political disintegration, — a sort of moral chaos difficult to con-

ceive. It was amid these evils that our Revolutionary fathers toiled and suffered. It was against these that Hamilton brought his great genius to bear.

At the age of twenty-three, after having been four years in the family of Washington as his adviser rather than subordinate, Hamilton, doubtless ambitious, and perhaps elated by a sense of his own importance, testily took offence at a hasty rebuke on the part of the General and resigned his situation. Loath was Washington to part with such a man from his household. But Hamilton was determined, and tardily he obtained a battalion, with the brevet rank of general, and distinguished himself in those engagements which preceded the capture of Lord Cornwallis; and on the surrender of this general, — feeling that the war was virtually ended, — he withdrew altogether from the army, and began the study of law at Albany. He had already married the daughter of General Schuyler, and thus formed an alliance with a powerful family. After six months of study he was admitted to the Bar, and soon removed to New York, which then contained but twenty-five thousand inhabitants.

His legal career was opened, like that of Cicero and Erskine, by a difficult case which attracted great attention and brought him into notice. In this case he rendered a political service as well as earned a legal fame. An action was brought by a poor woman, impoverished

by the war, against a wealthy British merchant, to recover damages for the use of a house he enjoyed when the city was occupied by the enemy. The action was founded on a recent statute of the State of New York, which authorized proceedings for trespass by persons who had been driven from their homes by the invasion of the British. The plaintiff therefore had the laws of New York on her side, as well as popular sympathies; and her claim was ably supported by the attorney-general. But it involved a grave constitutional question, and conflicted with the articles of peace which the Confederation had made with England; for in the treaty with Great Britain an amnesty had been agreed to for all acts done during the war by military orders. The interests of the plaintiff were overlooked in the great question whether the authority of Congress and the law of nations, or the law of a State legislature, should have the ascendency. In other words, Congress and the State of New York were in conflict as to which should be paramount, — the law of Congress, or the law of a sovereign State, — in a matter which affected a national treaty. If the treaty were violated, new complications would arise with England, and the authority of Congress be treated with contempt. Hamilton grappled with the subject in the most comprehensive manner, — like a statesman rather than a lawyer, — made a magnificent argument in favor of the general government,

and gained his case; although it would seem that natural justice was in favor of the poor woman, deprived of the use of her house by a wealthy alien, during the war. He rendered a service to centralized authority, to the power of Congress. It was the incipient contest between Federal and State authority. It was enlightened reason and patriotism gaining a victory over popular passions, over the assumptions of a State. It defined the respective rights of a State and of the Nation collectively. It was one of those cases which settled the great constitutional question that the authority of the Nation was greater than that of any State which composed it, in matters where Congress had a recognized jurisdiction.

It was about this time that Hamilton was brought in legal conflict with another young man of great abilities, ambition, and popularity; and this man was Aaron Burr, a grandson of Jonathan Edwards. Like Hamilton, he had gained great distinction in the war, and was one of the rising young men of the country. He was superior to Hamilton in personal popularity and bewitching conversation; his equal in grace of manner, in forensic eloquence and legal reputation, but his inferior in comprehensive intellect and force of character. Hamilton dwelt in the region of great ideas and principles; Burr loved to resort to legal technicalities, sophistries, and the dexterous use of dialectical weap-

ons. In arguing a case he would descend to every form of annoyance and interruption, by quibbles, notices, and appeals. Both lawyers were rapid, logical, compact, and eloquent Both seized the strong points of a case, like Mason and Webster. Hamilton was earnest and profound, and soared to elemental principles. Burr was acute, adroit, and appealed to passions. Both admired each other's talents and crossed each other's tracks, — rivals at the Bar and in political aspirations. The legal career of both was eclipsed by their political labors. The lawyer, in Hamilton's case, was lost in the statesman, and in Burr's in the politician. And how wide the distinction between a statesman and a politician! To be a great statesman a man must be conversant with history, finance, and science; he must know everything, like Gladstone, and he must have at heart the great interests of a nation; he must be a man of experience and wisdom and reason; he must be both enlightened and patriotic, merging his own personal ambition in the good of his country, — an oracle and sage whose utterances are received with attention and respect. To be a statesman demands the highest maturity of reason, far-reaching views, and the power of taking in the interests of a whole country rather than of a section. But to be a successful politician a man may be ignorant, narrow, and selfish; most probably he will be artful, dissembling, going in

for the winning side, shaking hands with everybody, profuse in promises, bland, affable, ready to do anything for anybody, and seeking the interests and flattering the prejudices of his own constituency, indifferent to the great questions on which the welfare of a nation rests, if only his own private interests be advanced. All politicians are not so small and contemptible; many are honest, as far as they can see, but can see only petty details, and not broad effects. Mere politicians, — observe, I qualify what I say, — *mere* politicians resemble statesmen, intellectually, as pedants resemble scholars of large culture, comprehensive intellects, and varied knowledge; they will consider a date, or a name, or a comma, of more importance than the great universe, which no one can ever fully and accurately explore.

I have given but a short notice of Hamilton as a lawyer, because his services as a statesman are of so much greater importance, especially to the student of history. His sphere became greatly enlarged when he entered into those public questions on which the political destiny of a nation rests. He was called to give a direction to the policy of the young government that had arisen out of the storms of revolution, — a policy which must be carried out when the nation should become powerful and draw upon itself the eyes of the civilized world. "Just as the twig is bent, the tree 's

inclined." It was the privilege and glory of Hamilton to be one of the most influential of all the men of his day in bending the twig which has now become so great a tree. We can see his hand in the distinctive features of our Constitution, and especially in that financial policy which extricated the nation from the poverty and embarrassments bequeathed by the war, and which, on the whole, has been the policy of the Government from his day to ours. Greater statesmen may arise than he, but no future statesman will ever be able to shape a national policy as he has done. He is one of the great fathers of the Republic, and was as efficient in founding a government and a financial policy, as Saint Augustine was in giving shape to the doctrines of the Church in his age, and in mediæval ages. Hamilton was therefore a benefactor to the State, as Augustine was to the Church.

But before Hamilton could be of signal service to the country as an organizer and legislator, it was necessary to have a national government which the country would accept, and which would be lasting and efficient. There was a political chaos for years after the war. Congress had no generally recognized authority; it was merely a board of delegates, whose decisions were disregarded, representing a league of States, not an independent authority. There was no chief executive officer, no court of national judges, no defined

legislature. We were a league of emancipated colonies drifting into anarchy. There was really no central government; only an autonomy of States like the ancient Grecian republics, and the lesser States were jealous of the greater. The great questions pertaining to slavery were unsettled, — how far it should extend, and how far it could be interfered with. We had ships and commerce, but no commercial treaties with other nations. We imported goods and merchandise, but there were no laws of tariff or of revenue. If one State came into collision with another State, there was no tribunal to settle the difficulty. No particular industries were protected. Of all things the most needed was a national government superior to State governments, taking into its own hands exclusively the army and navy, tariffs, revenues, the post-office, the regulation of commerce, and intercourse with foreign States. Oh, what times those were! What need of statesmanship and patriotism and wisdom! I have alluded to various evils of the day. I will not repeat them. Why, our condition at the end of the War of the Rebellion, when we had a national debt of three thousand millions, and general derangement and demoralization, was an Elysium compared with that of our fathers at the close of the Revolutionary War, — no central power, no constitution, no government, with poverty, agricultural distress, and uncertainty, and the prostration

of all business; no national credit, no national éclat, — a mass of rude, unconnected, and anarchic forces threatening to engulf us in worse evils than those from which we had fled.

The thinking and sober men of the country were at last aroused, and the conviction became general that the Confederacy was unable to cope with the difficulties which arose on every side. So, through the influence of Hamilton, a convention of five States assembled at Annapolis to provide a remedy for the public evils. But it did not fully represent the varied opinions and interests of the whole country. All it could do was to prepare the way for a general convention of States; and twelve States sent delegates to Philadelphia, who met in the year 1787. The great public career of Hamilton began as a delegate from the State of New York to this illustrious assembly. He was not the most distinguished member, for he was still a young man; nor the most popular, for he had too much respect for the British constitution, and was too aristocratic in his sympathies, and perhaps in his manners, to be a favorite. But he was probably the ablest man of the convention, the most original and creative in his genius, the most comprehensive and far-seeing in his views, — a man who inspired confidence and respect for his integrity and patriotism, combining intellectual with moral force. He would have been a great man in any

age or country, or in any legislative assembly, — a man who had great influence over superior minds, as he did over that of Washington, whose confidence he had from first to last.

I am inclined to think that no such an assembly of statesmen has since been seen in this country as that which met to give a constitution to the American Republic. Of course, I cannot enumerate all the distinguished men. They were all distinguished, — men of experience, patriotism, and enlightened minds. There were fifty-four of these illustrious men, — the picked men of the land, of whom the nation was proud. Franklin, now in his eightieth year, was the Nestor of the assembly, covered with honors from home and abroad for his science and his political experience and sagacity, — a man who received more flattering attentions in France than any American who ever visited it; one of the great savants of the age, dignified, affable, courteous, whom everybody admired and honored. Washington, too, was there, — the Ulysses of the war, brave in battle and wise in council, of transcendent dignity of character, whose influence was patriarchal, the synonym of moral greatness, to be revered through all ages and countries; a truly immortal man whose fame has been steadily increasing. Adams, Jefferson, and Jay, three very great lights, were absent on missions to Europe; but

Rufus King, Roger Sherman, Oliver Ellsworth, Livingston, Dickerson, Rutledge, Randolph, Pinckney, Madison, were men of great ability and reputation, independent in their views, but all disposed to unite in the common good. Some had been delegates to the Stamp Act Congress of 1765; some, members of the Continental Congress of 1774; some, signers of the Declaration of Independence. There were no political partisans then, as we now understand the word, for the division lines of parties were not then drawn. All were animated with the desire of conciliation and union. All felt the necessity of concessions. They differed in their opinions as to State rights, representation, and slavery. Some were more democratic, and some more aristocratic than the majority, but all were united in maintaining the independence of the country and in distrust of monarchies.

It is impossible within my narrow limits to describe the deliberations of these patriots, until their work was consummated in the glorious Constitution which is our marvel and our pride. The discussions first turned on the respective powers to be exercised by the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of the proposed central government, and the duration of the terms of service. Hamilton's views favored a more efficient executive than was popular with the States or delegates; but it cannot be doubted that his powerful

arguments, and clear enunciation of fundamental principles of government had great weight with men more eager for truth than victory. There were animated discussions as to the ratio of representation, and the equality of States, which gave rise to the political parties which first divided the nation, and which were allied with those serious questions pertaining to State rights which gave rise, in part, to our late war. But the root of the dissensions, and the subject of most animated debates, was slavery, — that awful curse and difficult question, which was not settled until the sword finally cut that Gordian knot. But so far as compromises could settle the question, they were made in the spirit of patriotism, — not on principles of abstract justice, but of expediency and common-sense. It was evident from the first that there could be no federal, united government, no nation, only a league of States, unless compromises were made in reference to slavery, whose evils were as apparent then as they were afterwards. For the sake of nationality and union and peace, slavery was tolerated by the Constitution. To some this may appear to have been a grave error, but to the makers of the Constitution it seemed to be a less evil to tolerate slavery than have no Constitution at all, which would unite all the States. Harmony and national unity seemed to be the paramount consideration.

So a compromise was made. We are apt to forget

how great institutions are often based on compromise, — not a mean and craven sentiment, as some think, but a spirit of conciliation and magnanimity, without which there can be no union or stability. Take the English Church, which has survived the revolutions of human thought for three centuries, which has been a great bulwark against infidelity, and has proved itself to be dear to the heart of the nation, and the source of boundless blessings and proud recollections, — it was a compromise, half way indeed between Rome and Geneva, but nevertheless a great and beneficent organization on the whole. Take the English constitution itself, one of the grandest triumphs of human reason and experience, — it was only gradually formed by a series of bloodless concessions. Take the Roman constitution, under which the whole civilized world was brought into allegiance, — it was a series of concessions granted by the aristocratic classes. Most revolutions and wars end in compromise after the means of fighting are expended. Most governments are based on expediency rather than abstract principles. The actions of governments are necessarily expedients, — the wisest policy in view of all the circumstances. Even such an uncompromising logician as Saint Paul accepted some customs which we think were antagonistic to the spirit of his general doctrines. He was a great temperance man, but recommended a little wine to Timothy for the

stomach's sake. And Moses, too, the great founder of the Jewish polity, permitted polygamy because of the hardness of men's hearts. So the fathers of the Constitution preferred a constitution with slavery to no constitution at all. Had each of those illustrious men persisted in his own views, we should have had only an autonomy of States instead of the glorious Union, which in spite of storms stands unshaken to-day.

I cannot dwell on those protracted debates, which lasted four months, or on the minor questions which demanded attention, — all centring in the great question whether the government should be federative or national. But the ablest debater of the convention was Hamilton, and his speeches were impressive and convincing. He endeavored to impress upon the minds of the members that liberty was found neither in the rule of a few aristocrats, nor in extreme democracy; that democracies had proved more short-lived than aristocracies, as illustrated in Greece, Rome, and England. He showed that extreme democracies, especially in cities, would be governed by demagogues; that universal suffrage was a dangerous experiment when the people had neither intelligence nor virtue; that no government could last which was not just and enlightened; that all governments should be administered by men of experience and integrity; that any central government should have complete control over

commerce, tariffs, revenues, post-offices, patents, foreign relations, the army and navy, peace or war; and that in all these functions of national interest the central government should be independent of State legislatures, so that the State and National legislatures should not clash. Many of his views were not adopted, but it is remarkable that the subsequent changes and modifications of the Constitution have been in the direction of his policy; that wars and great necessities have gradually brought about what he advocated with so much calmness and wisdom. Guizot asserts that "he must ever be classed among the men who have best understood the vital principles and elemental conditions of government; and that there is not in the Constitution of the United States an element of order, or force, or duration which he did not powerfully contribute to secure." This is the tribute of that great and learned statesman and historian to the genius and services of Hamilton. What an exalted praise! To be the maker of a constitution requires the highest maturity of reason. It was the peculiar glory of Moses, — the ablest man ever born among the Jews, and the greatest benefactor his nation ever had. How much prouder the fame of a beneficent and enlightened legislator than that of a conqueror! The code which Napoleon gave to France partially rescues his name from the infamy that his injuries inflicted on mankind. Who are the

greatest men of the present day, and the most beneficent? Such men as Gladstone and Bright, who are seeking by wise legislation to remove or meliorate the evils of centuries of injustice. Who have earned the proudest national fame in the history of America since the Constitution was made? Such men as Webster, Clay, Seward, Sumner, who devoted their genius to the elucidation of fundamental principles of government and political economy. The sphere of a great lawyer may bring more personal gains, but it is comparatively narrow to that of a legislator who originates important measures for the relief or prosperity of a whole country.

The Constitution when completed was not altogether such as Hamilton would have made, but he accepted it cordially as the best which could be had. It was not perfect, but probably the best ever devised by human genius, with its checks and balances, "like one of those rocking-stones reared by the Druids," as Winthrop beautifully said, "which the finger of a child may vibrate to its centre, yet which the might of an army cannot move from its place."

The next thing to be done was to secure its ratification by the several States, — a more difficult thing than at first sight would be supposed; for the State legislatures were mainly composed of mere politicians, without experience or broad views, and animated by popular

passions. So the States were tardy in accepting it, especially the larger ones, like Virginia, New York, and Massachusetts. And it may reasonably be doubted whether it would have been accepted at all, had it not been for the able papers which Hamilton, Madison, and Jay wrote and published in a leading New York paper, — essays which go under the name of "The Federalist," long a text-book in our colleges, and which is the best interpreter of the Constitution itself. It is everywhere quoted; and if those able papers may have been surpassed in eloquence by some of the speeches of our political orators, they have never been equalled in calm reasoning. They appealed to the intelligence of the age, — an age which loved to read Butler's "Analogy," and Edwards "On the Will;" an age not yet engrossed in business and pleasure, when people had time to ponder on what is profound and lofty; an age not so brilliant as our own in mechanical inventions and scientific researches, but more contemplative, and more impressible by grand sentiments. I do not say that the former times were better than these, as old men have talked for two thousand years, for those times were hard, and the struggles of life were great, — without facilities of travel, without luxuries, without even comforts, as they seem to us; but there was doubtless then a loftier spiritual life, and fewer distractions in the pursuit of solid knowledge; people then could live in

the country all the year round without complaint, or that restless craving for novelties which demoralizes and undermines the moral health. Hamilton wrote sixty-three of the eighty-five (more than half) of these celebrated papers which had a great influence on public opinion, — clear, logical, concise, masterly in statement, and in the elucidation of fundamental principles of government. Probably no series of political essays has done so much to mould the opinions of American statesmen as those of "The Federalist," — a thesaurus of political wisdom, as much admired in Europe as in America. It was translated into most of the European languages, and in France placed side by side with Montesquieu's "Spirit of Laws" in genius and ability. It was not written for money or fame, but from patriotism, to enlighten the minds of the people, and prepare them for the reception of the Constitution.

In this great work Hamilton rendered a mighty service to his country. Nothing but the conclusive arguments which he made, assisted by Jay and Madison, aroused the people fully to a sense of the danger attending an imperfect union of States. By the efforts of Hamilton outside the convention, more even than in the convention, the Constitution was finally adopted, — first by Delaware and last by New York, in 1788, and then only by one majority in the legislature. So difficult was the work of construction. We forget the obstacles

and the anxieties and labors of our early statesmen, in the enjoyment of our present liberties.

But the public services of Hamilton do not end here. To him pre-eminently belongs the glory of restoring or creating our national credit, and relieving universal financial embarrassments. The Constitution was the work of many men. Our financial system was the work of one, who worked alone, as Michael Angelo worked on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

When Washington became President, he at once made choice of Hamilton as his Secretary of the Treasury, at the recommendation of Robert Morris, *the* financier of the Revolution, who not only acknowledged his own obligations to him, but declared that he was the only man in the United States who could settle the difficulty about the public debt. In finance, Hamilton, it is generally conceded, had an original and creative genius. "He smote the rock of the national resources," said Webster, "and abundant streams of revenue gushed forth. He touched the dead corpse of the public credit, and it sprang upon its feet. The fabled birth of Minerva from the brain of Jupiter was hardly more sudden than the financial system of the United States as it burst from the conception of Alexander Hamilton."

When he assumed the office of Secretary of the Treasury there were five forms of public indebtedness

for which he was required to provide, — the foreign debt; debts of the Government to States; the army debt; the debt for supplies in the various departments during the war; and the old Continental issues. There was no question about the foreign debt. The assumption of the State debts incurred for the war was identical with the debts of the Union, since they were incurred for the same object. In fact, all the various obligations had to be discharged, and there was neither money nor credit. Hamilton proposed a foreign loan, to be raised in Europe; but the old financiers had sought foreign loans and failed. How was the new Congress likely to succeed any better? Only by creating confidence; making it certain that the interest of the loan would be paid, and paid in specie. In other words, they were to raise a revenue to pay this interest. This simple thing the old Congress had not thought of, or had neglected, or found impracticable. And how should the required revenue be raised? Direct taxation was odious and unreliable. Hamilton would raise it by duties on imports. But how was an impoverished country to raise money to pay the duties when there was no money? How was the dead corpse to be revived? He would develop the various industries of the nation, all in their infancy, by protecting them, so that the merchants and the manufacturers could compete with foreigners; so that foreign goods could be brought

to our seaports in our own ships, and our own raw materials exchanged for articles we could not produce ourselves, and be subject to duties, — chiefly on articles of luxury, which some were rich enough to pay for. And he would offer inducements for foreigners to settle in the country, by the sale of public lands at a nominal sum, — men who had a little money, and not absolute paupers; men who could part with their superfluities for either goods manufactured or imported, and especially for some things they must have, on which light duties would be imposed, like tea and coffee; and heavy duties for things which the rich would have, like broadcloths, wines, brandies, silks, and carpets. Thus a revenue could be raised more than sufficient to pay the interest on the debt. He made this so clear by his luminous statements, going into all details, that confidence gradually was established both as to our ability and also our honesty; and money flowed in easily and plentifully from Europe, since foreigners felt certain that the interest on their loans would be paid.

Thus in all his demonstrations he appealed to common-sense, not theories. He took into consideration the necessities of his own country, not the interests of other countries. He would legislate for America, not universal humanity. The one great national necessity was protection, and this he made as clear as the light of the sun. "One of our errors," said he, "is that of judg-

ing things by abstract calculations, which though geometrically true, are practically false." It was clear that the Government must have a revenue, and that revenue could only be raised by direct or indirect taxation; and he preferred, under the circumstances of the country, indirect taxes, which the people did not feel, and were not compelled to pay unless they liked; for the poor were not compelled to buy foreign imports, but if they bought them they must pay a tax to government. And he based his calculations that people could afford to purchase foreign articles, of necessity and luxury, on the enormous resources of the country, — then undeveloped, indeed, but which would be developed by increasing settlements, increasing industries, and increasing exports; and his predictions were soon fulfilled. In a few years the debt disappeared altogether, or was felt to be no burden. The country grew rich as its industries were developed; and its industries were developed by protection.

I will not enter upon that unsettled question of political economy. There are two sides to it. What is adapted to the circumstances of one country may not be adapted to another; what will do for England may not do practically for Russia; and what may be adapted to the condition of a country at one period may not be adapted at another period. When a country has the monopoly of a certain manufacture, then that country

can dispense with protection. Before manufactures were developed in England by the aid of steam and improved machinery, the principles of free-trade would not have been adopted by the nation. The landed interests of Great Britain required no protection forty years ago, since there was wheat enough raised in the country to supply demands. So the landed aristocracy accepted free-trade, because their interests were not jeopardized, and the interests of the manufacturers were greatly promoted. Now that the landed interests are in jeopardy from a diminished rental, they must either be protected, or the lands must be cut up into small patches and farms, as they are in France. Farmers must raise fruit and vegetables instead of wheat.

When Hamilton proposed protection for our infant manufactures, they never could have grown unless they had been assisted; we should have been utterly dependent on Europe. That is just what Europe would have liked. But he did not legislate for Europe, but for America. He considered its necessities, not abstract theories, nor even the interests of other nations. How hypocritical the cant in England about free-trade! There never was free-trade in that country, except in reference to some things it must have, and some things it could monopolize. Why did Parliament retain the duty on tobacco and wines and other things? Because England must have a revenue. Hamilton did the same.

He would raise a revenue, just as Great Britain raises a revenue to-day, in spite of free-trade, by taxing certain imports. And if the manufactures of England to-day should be in danger of being swamped by foreign successful competition, the Government would change its policy, and protect the manufactures. Better protect them than allow them to perish, even at the expense of national pride.

But the manufactures of this country at the close of the Revolutionary War were too insignificant to expect much immediate advantage from protection. It was Hamilton's policy chiefly to raise a revenue, and to raise it by duties on imports, as the simplest and easiest and surest way, when people were poor and money was scarce. Had he lived in these days, he might have modified his views, and raised revenue in other ways. But he labored for his time and circumstances. He took into consideration the best way to raise a revenue for his day; for this he must have, somehow or other, to secure confidence and credit. He was most eminently practical. He hated visionary ideas and abstract theories; he had no faith in them at all. You can push any theory, any abstract truth even, into absurdity, as the theologians of the Middle Ages carried out their doctrines to their logical sequence. You cannot settle the complicated relations of governments by deductions. At best you can only approximate to the truth by induction, by a

due consideration of conflicting questions and issues and interests.

The next important measure of Hamilton was the recommendation of a National Bank, in order to facilitate the collection of the revenue. Here he encountered great opposition. Many politicians of the school of Jefferson were jealous of moneyed institutions, but Hamilton succeeded in having a bank established, though not with so large a capital as he desired.

It need not be told that the various debates in Congress on the funding of the national debt, on tariffs, on the bank, and other financial measures, led to the formation of two great political parties, which divided the nation for more than twenty years, — parties of which Hamilton and Jefferson were the respective leaders. Madison now left the support of Hamilton, and joined hands with the party of Jefferson, which took the name of Republican, or Democratic-Republican. The Federal party, which Hamilton headed, had the support of Washington, Adams, Jay, Pinckney, and Morris. It was composed of the most memorable names of the Revolution and, it may be added, of the more wealthy, learned, and conservative classes; some would stigmatize it as being the most aristocratic. The colleges, the courts of law, and the fashionable churches were generally presided over by Federalists. Old gentlemen of social position and sta-

ble religious opinions belonged to this party. But ambitious young men, chafing under the restraints of consecrated respectability, popular politicians, or as we might almost say the demagogues, the progressive and restless people and liberal thinkers enamored of French philosophy and theories and abstractions, were inclined to be Republicans. There were exceptions, of course. I only speak in a general way; nor would I give the impression that there were not many distinguished, able, and patriotic men enlisted in the party of Jefferson, especially in the Southern States, in Pennsylvania, and New York. Jefferson himself was, next to Hamilton, the ablest statesman of the country, — upright, sincere, patriotic, contemplative; simple in taste, yet aristocratic in habits; a writer rather than an orator, ignorant of finance, but versed in history and general knowledge, devoted to State rights, and bitterly opposed to a strong central power. He hated titles, trappings of rank and of distinction, ostentatious dress, shoe-buckles, hair-powder, pig-tails, and everything English, while he loved France and the philosophy of liberal thinkers; not a religious man, but an honest and true man. And when he became President, on the breaking up of the Federal party, partly from the indiscretions of Adams and the intrigues of Burr, and hostility to the intellectual supremacy of Hamilton,—who was never truly popular, any more than Webster and Burke

were, since intellectual arrogance and superiority are offensive to fortunate or ambitious nobodies, — Jefferson's prudence and modesty kept him from meddling with the funded debt and from entangling alliances with the nation he admired. Jefferson was not sweeping in his removals from office, although he unfortunately inaugurated that fatal policy consummated by Jackson, which has since been the policy of the Government, — that spoils belong to victors. This policy has done more to demoralize the politics of the country than all other causes combined; yet it is now the aim of patriotic and enlightened men to destroy its power and re-introduce that of Washington and Hamilton, and of all nations of political experience. The civil-service reform is now one of the main questions and issues of American legislation; but so bitterly is it opposed by venal politicians that I fear it cannot be made fully operative until the country demands it as imperatively as the English did the passage of their Reform Bill. However, it has gained so much popular strength that both of the prominent political parties of the present time profess to favor it, and promise to make it effective.

It would be interesting to describe the animosities of the Federal and Republican parties, which have since never been equalled in bitterness and rancor and fierceness, but I have not time. I am old enough to remem-

ber them, until they passed away with the administration of General Jackson, when other questions arose. With the struggle for ascendency between these political parties, the public services of Hamilton closed. He resumed the practice of the law in New York, even before the close of Washington's administration. He became the leader of the Bar, without making a fortune; for in those times lawyers did not know how to charge, any more than city doctors. I doubt if his income as a lawyer ever reached $10,000 a year; but he lived well, as most lawyers do, even if they die poor. His house was the centre of hospitalities, and thither resorted the best society of the city, as well as distinguished people from all parts of the country.

Nor did his political influence decline after he had parted with power. He was a rare exception to most public men after their official life is ended; and nothing so peculiarly marks a great man as the continuance of influence with the absence of power; for influence and power are distinct. Influence, in fact, never passes away, but power is ephemeral. Theologians, poets, philosophers, great writers, have influence and no power; railroad kings and bank presidents have power but not necessarily influence. Saint Augustine, in a little African town, had more influence than the bishop of Rome. Rousseau had no power, but he created the French Revolution. Socrates revolutionized Greek philosophy,

but had not power enough to save his life from unjust accusations. What an influence a great editor wields in these times, yet how little power he has, unless he owns the journal he directs! What an influence was enjoyed by a wise and able clergyman in New England one hundred years ago, and which was impossible without force of character and great wisdom! Hamilton had wisdom and force of character, and therefore had great influence with his party after he retired from office. Most of our public men retire to utter obscurity when they have lost office, but Hamilton was as prominent in private life as in his official duties. He was the oracle of his party, a great political sage, whose utterances had the moral force of law. He never lost the leadership of his party, even when he retired from public life. His political influence lasted till he died. He had no rewards to give, no office to fill, but he still ruled like a chieftain. It was he who defeated by his quiet influence the political aspirations of Burr, when Burr was the most popular man in the country,—a great wire-puller, a prince of politicians, a great organizer of political forces, like Van Buren and Thurlow Weed,—whose eloquent conversation and fascinating manner few men could resist, to say nothing of women. But for Hamilton, he would in all probability have been President of the United States, at a time when individual genius and ability might not unreasonably aspire

to that high office. He was the rival of Jefferson, and lost the election by only one vote, after the equality of candidates had thrown the election into the House of Representatives. Hamilton did not like Jefferson, but he preferred Jefferson to Burr, since he knew that the country would be safe under his guidance, and would not be safe with so unscrupulous a man as Burr. He distrusted and disliked Burr; not because he was his rival at the Bar, — for great rival lawyers may personally be good friends, like Brougham and Lyndhurst, like Mason and Webster, — but because his political integrity was not to be trusted; because he was a selfish and scheming politician, bent on personal advancement rather than the public good. And this hostility was returned with an unrelenting and savage fierceness, which culminated in deadly wrath when Burr found that Hamilton's influence prevented his election as Governor of New York, — which office, it seems, he preferred to the Vice-presidency, which had dignity but no power. Burr wanted power rather than influence. In his bitter disappointment and remorseless rage, nothing would satisfy him but the blood of Hamilton. He picked a quarrel, and would accept neither apology nor reconciliation; he wanted revenge.

Hamilton knew he could not escape Burr's vengeance; that he must fight the fatal duel, in obedience to that "code of honor" which had tyrannically bound gentle-

men since the feudal ages, though unknown to Pagan Greece and Rome. There was no law or custom which would have warranted a challenge from Æschines to Demosthenes, when the former was defeated in the forensic and oratorical contest and sent into banishment. But the necessity for Hamilton to fight his antagonist was such as he had not the moral power to resist, and that few other men in his circumstances would have resisted. In the eyes of public men there was no honorable way of escape. Life or death turned on his skill with the pistol; and he knew that Burr, here, was his superior. So he made his will, settled his affairs, and offered up his precious life; not to his country, not to a great cause, not for great ideas and interests, but to avoid the stigma of society, — a martyr to a feudal conventionality. Such a man ought not to have fought; he should have been above a wicked social law. But why expect perfection? Who has not infirmities, defects, and weaknesses? How few are beyond their age in its ideas; how few can resist the pressure of social despotism! Hamilton erred by our highest standard, but not when judged by the circumstances that surrounded him. The greatest living American died really by an assassin's hand, since the murderer was animated with revenge and hatred. The greatest of our statesmen passed away in a miserable duel; yet ever to be venerated for his services and respected for his general character, for

his integrity, patriotism, every gentlemanly quality, — brave, generous, frank, dignified, sincere, and affectionate in his domestic relations.

His death, on the 11th of July, 1804, at the early age of forty-seven, — the age when Bacon was made Lord Chancellor, the age when most public men are just beginning to achieve fame, — was justly and universally regarded as a murder; not by the hand of a fanatic or lunatic, but by the deliberately malicious hand of the Vice-President of the United States, and a most accomplished man. It was a cold, intended, and atrocious murder, which the pulpit and the press equally denounced in most unmeasured terms of reprobation, and with mingled grief and wrath It created so profound an impression on the public mind, that duelling as a custom could no longer stand so severe a rebuke, and it practically passed away, — at least at the North.

And public indignation pursued the murderer, though occupying the second highest political office in the country. He paid no insignificant penalty for his crime. He never anticipated such a retribution. He was obliged to flee; he became an exile and a wanderer in foreign lands, — poor, isolated, shunned. He was doomed to eternal ignominy; he never recovered even political power and influence; he did not receive even adequate patronage as a lawyer. He never again

reigned in society, though he never lost his fascination as a talker. He was a ruined man, in spite of services and talents and social advantages; and no whitewashing can ever change the verdict of good men in this country. Aaron Burr fell, — like Lucifer, like a star from heaven, — and never can rise again in the esteem of his countrymen; no time can wipe away his disgrace. His is a blasted name, like that of Benedict Arnold. And here let me say, that great men, although they do not commit crimes, cannot escape the penalty of even defects and vices that some consider venial. No position however lofty, no services however great, no talents however brilliant, will enable a man to secure lasting popularity and influence when respect for his moral character is undermined; ultimately he will fall. He may have defects, he may have offensive peculiarities, and retain position and respect, for everybody has faults; but if his moral character is bad, nothing can keep him long on the elevation to which he has climbed, — no political friendships, no remembrance of services and deeds. If such a man as Bacon fell from his high estate for taking bribes, — although bribery was a common vice among the public characters of his day, — how could Burr escape ignominy for the murder of the greatest statesman of his age?

Yet Hamilton lives, although the victim of his rival. He lives in the nation's heart, which cannot forget his

matchless services. He is still the admiration of our greatest statesmen; he is revered, as Webster is, by jurists and enlightened patriots. No statesman superior to him has lived in this great country. He was a man who lived in the pursuit of truth, and in the realm of great ideas; who hated sophistries and lies, and sought to base government on experience and wisdom.

"Great were the boons which this pure patriot gave,
Doomed by his rival to an early grave;
A nation's tears upon that grave were shed.
Oh, could the nation by his truths be led!
Then of a land, enriched from sea to sea,
Would other realms its earnest following be,
And the lost ages of the world restore
Those golden ages which the bards adore."

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XLVII.

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

THE FRENCH EMPIRE.

A. D. 1769–1821.

XLVII.

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

THE FRENCH EMPIRE.

IT is difficult to say anything new about Napoleon Bonaparte, either in reference to his genius, his character, or his deeds.

His genius is universally admitted, both as a general and an administrator. No general so great has appeared in our modern times. He ranks with Alexander and Cæsar in ancient times, and he is superior to Gustavus Adolphus, Turenne, Condé, Marlborough, Frederic II., Wellington, or any of the warriors who have figured in the great wars of Europe, from Charlemagne to the battle of Waterloo. His military career was so brilliant that it dazzled contemporaries. Without the advantages of birth or early patronage, he rose to the highest pinnacle of human glory. His victories were prodigious and unexampled; and it took all Europe to resist him. He aimed at nothing less than universal sovereignty; and had he not, when intoxicated with his conquests, attempted impossibilities, his power

would have been practically unlimited in France. He had all the qualities for success in war, — insight, fertility of resource, rapidity of movement, power of combination, coolness, intrepidity, audacity, boldness tempered by calculation, will, energy which was never relaxed, powers of endurance, and all the qualities which call out enthusiasm and attach soldiers and followers to personal interests. His victorious career was unchecked until all the nations of Europe, in fear and wrath, combined against him. He was a military prodigy, equally great in tactics and strategy, — a master of all the improvements which had been made in the art of war, from Epaminondas to Frederic II.

His genius for civil administration was equally remarkable, and is universally admitted. Even Metternich, who detested him, admits that "he was as great as a statesman as he was as a warrior, and as great as an administrator as he was as a statesman." He brought order out of confusion, developed the industry of his country, restored the finances, appropriated and rewarded all eminent talents, made the whole machinery of government subservient to his aims, and even seemed to animate it by his individual will. He ruled France as by the power of destiny. The genius of Richelieu, of Mazarin, and of Colbert pale before his enlightened mind, which comprehended equally the principles of political science and the vast details of a

complicated government. For executive ability I know no monarch who has surpassed him.

We do not associate with military genius, as a general rule, marked intellectual qualities in other spheres. But Napoleon was an exception to this rule. He was tolerably well educated, and he possessed considerable critical powers in art, literature, and science. He penetrated through all shams and impostures. He was rarely deceived as to men or women. He could be eloquent and interesting in conversation. Some of his expressions pierced like lightning, and were exceedingly effective. His despatches were laconic and clear. He knew something about everybody of note, and if he had always been in a private station his intellectual force would have attracted attention in almost any vocation he might have selected. His natural vivacity, wit, and intensity would have secured friends and admirers in any sphere.

Nor are the judgments of mankind less unanimous in reference to his character than his intellect and genius. He stands out in history in a marked manner with two sides, — great and little, good and bad. None can deny him many good qualities. His industry was marvellous; he was temperate in eating and drinking; he wasted no precious time; he rewarded his friends, to whom he was true; he did not persecute his enemies unless they stood in his way, and unless he had a

strong personal dislike for them, as he had for Madame de Staël; he could be magnanimous at times; he was indulgent to his family, and allowed his wife to buy as many India shawls and diamonds as she pleased; he was never parsimonious in his gifts, although personally inclined to economy; he generally ruled by the laws he had accepted or enacted; he despised formalities and etiquette; he sought knowledge from every quarter; he encouraged merit in all departments; he was not ruled by women, like most of the kings of France; he was not enslaved by prejudices, and was lenient when he could afford to be; and in the earlier part of his career he was doubtless patriotic in his devotion to the interests of his country.

Moreover, many of his faults were the result of circumstances, and of the unprecedented prosperity which he enjoyed. Pride, egotism, tyranny, and ostentation were to be expected of a man whose will was law. Nearly all men would have exhibited these traits, had they been seated on such a throne as his; and almost any man's temper would have occasionally given way under such burdens as he assumed, such hostilities as he encountered, and such treasons as he detected. Surrounded by spies and secret enemies, he was obliged to be reserved. With a world at his feet, it was natural that he should be arbitrary and impatient of contradiction. There have been successful railway magnates

as imperious as he, and bank presidents as supercilious, and clerical dignitaries as haughty, in their smaller spheres. Pride, consciousness, and egotism are the natural result of power and flattery in all conditions of life; and when a single man controls the destinies of nations, he is an exception to the infirmities of human nature if he does not seek to bend everything before his haughty will. There have been many Richelieus, there has been but one Marcus Aurelius; many Hildebrands, only one Alfred; many Ahabs, only one David, one St. Louis, one Washington.

But with all due allowance for the force of circumstances in the development of character, and for those imperial surroundings which blind the arbiters of nations, there were yet natural traits of character in Napoleon which call out the severest reprobation, and which make him an object of indignation and intense dislike among true-minded students of history. His egotism was almost superhuman, his selfishness was most unscrupulous, his ambition absolutely boundless. He claimed a monopoly in perfidy and lying; he had no idea of moral responsibility; he had no sympathy with misfortune, no conscience, no fear of God. He was cold, hard, ironical, and scornful. He was insolent in his treatment of women, brusque in manners, severe on all who thwarted or opposed him. He committed great crimes in his ascent to supreme dominion, and mocked

the reason, the conscience, and the rights of mankind. He broke the most solemn treaties; he was faithless to his cause; he centred in himself the interests he was intrusted to guard; he recklessly insulted all the governments of Europe; he put himself above Providence; he disgracefully elevated his brothers; he sought to aggrandize himself at any cost, and ruthlessly grasped the sceptre of universal dominion as if he were an irresistible destiny whom it was folly to oppose. In all this he aimed to be greater than conscience.

Such was the character of a despot who arose upon the ruins of the old monarchy, — the product of a revolution, whose ideas he proposed to defend. Most historians, and all moralists, are on the whole unanimous in this verdict. As for his deeds, they rise up before our minds, compelling admiration and awe. He was the incarnation of force; he performed the most brilliant exploits of our modern times.

The question then arises, whether his marvellous gifts and transcendent opportunities were directed to the good of his country and the cause of civilization. In other words, did he render great services to France, which make us forget his faults? How will he be judged by enlightened posterity? May he be ranked among great benefactors, like Constantine, Charlemagne, Theodosius, Peter the Great, and Oliver Cromwell? It is the privilege of great sovereigns

to be judged for their services rather than by their defects.

Let us summon, then, this great Emperor before the bar of universal reason. Let him make his own defence. Let us first hear what he has to say for himself, for he is the most distinguished culprit of modern times, and it may yet take three generations to place him in his true historical niche; and more, his fame, though immortal, may forever be in doubt, like that of Julius Cæsar, whom we still discuss.

This great man may quietly yet haughtily say to us who seek to take his measure: "It is for my services to France that I claim to be judged. I do not claim perfection. I admit I made grand mistakes; I even committed acts which the world stigmatizes as crimes. I seized powers which did not belong to me; I overthrew constitutions; I made myself supreme; I mocked the old powers of earth; I repudiated the ideas in the name of which I climbed to a throne; I was harsh, insolent, and tyrannical; I divorced the wife who was the maker of my fortune; I caused the assassination of the Duc d'Enghien; I invaded Spain and Russia; and I wafted the names of my conquering generals to the ends of the earth in imprecations and curses. These were my mistakes, — crimes, if you please to call them; but it is not for these you must judge me. Did I not come to the rescue of law and

order when France was torn with anarchies? Did I not deliver the constituted authorities from the mob? Did I not rescue France from foreign enemies when they sought to repress the Revolution and restore the Bourbons? Was I not the avenger of twenty-five hungry millions on those old tyrants who would have destroyed their nationality? Did I not break up those combinations which would have perpetuated the enslavement of Europe? Did I not seek to plant liberty in Italy and destroy the despotisms of German princes? Did I not give unity to great States and enlarge their civilization? Did I not rebuke and punish Austria, Prussia, Russia, and England for interfering with our Revolution and combining against the rights of a republic? Did I not elevate France, and give scope to its enterprise, and develop its resources, and inspire its citizens with an unknown enthusiasm, and make the country glorious, so that even my enemies came to my court to wonder and applaud? And did I not leave such an immortal prestige, even when I was disarmed and overthrown by the armies of combined Christendom, that my illustrious name, indelibly engraved in the hearts of my countrymen, was enough to seat my nephew on the throne from which I was torn, and give to his reign a glory scarcely inferior to my own? These were my services to France, — the return of centralized power amid anarchies and dis-

contents, and laws which successive revolutions have not destroyed, but which shall blaze in wisdom through successive generations."

Now, how far can these claims be substantiated? Was Napoleon, although a usurper, like Cromwell and Cæsar, also a benefactor like them; and did his fabric of imperialism prove a blessing to civilization? What, in reality, were his services? Do they offset his aspirations and crimes? Is he worthy of the praises of mankind? Great deeds he performed, but did they ultimately tend to the welfare of France and of Europe?

It was a great service which Napoleon rendered to France, in the beginning of his career, at the siege of Toulon, when he was a lieutenant of artillery. He disobeyed, indeed, the orders of his superiors, but won success by the skill with which he planted his cannon, showing remarkable genius. This service to the Republic was not forgotten, although he remained long unemployed, living obscurely at Paris with straitened resources. By some means he caught the ear of Barras, the most able of the Directory, and was intrusted with the defence of the Convention in a great crisis, and saved it by his "whiff of grape-shot," as Carlyle calls his dispersion of the mob in the streets of Paris, from the steps of St. Roque. This, doubtless, was a service to the cause of law and order, since he acted under orders, and discharged his duty, like an obedient

servant of the constituted authorities, without reluctance, and with great skill, — perhaps the only man of France, at that time, who could have done that important work so well, and with so little bloodshed. Had the sections prevailed, — and it was feared that they would, — the anarchy of the worst days of the Revolution would have resulted. But this decisive action of the young officer, intrusted with a great command, put an end for forty years to the assumption of unlawful weapons by the mob. There was no future insurrection of the people against government till Louis Philippe was placed upon the throne in 1830. Napoleon here vindicated not only the cause of law and order, but the Revolution itself; for in spite of its excesses and crimes, it had abolished feudalism, unequal privileges, the reign of priests and nobles, and a worn-out monarchy; it had proclaimed a constitutional government, in the face of all the European despotisms; it had asserted that self-government was a possibility, even in France; it had inspired the whole nation with enthusiasm, and proclaimed the Republic when hostile armies were ready to march upon the soil of France and restore the Bourbons. All the impulses of the Revolution were generous; all its struggles were heroic, although it was sullied with crimes, and was marked by inexperience and follies. The nation rallied around a great idea, — an idea which is imper-

ishable, and destined to unbounded triumph. To this idea of liberty Napoleon was not then unfaithful, although some writers assert that he was ready to draw his sword in any cause which promised him promotion.

The National Convention, which he saved by military genius and supreme devotion to it, had immortalized itself by inspiring France with heroism; and after a struggle of three years with united Christendom, jealous of liberty, dissolved itself, and transferred the government to a Directory.

This Directory, in reward of the services which Napoleon had rendered, and in admiration of his genius, bestowed upon him the command of the army of Italy. Probably Josephine, whom he then married, had sufficient influence with Barras to secure the appointment. It was not popular with the generals, of course, to have a young man of twenty-six, without military prestige, put over their heads. But results soon justified the discernment of Barras.

At the head of only forty thousand men, poorly clad and equipped and imperfectly fed, Napoleon in four weeks defeated the Sardinians, and in less than two years, in eighteen pitched battles, he destroyed the Austrian armies which were about to invade France. That glorious campaign of 1796 is memorable for the conquest of Piedmont and Lombardy, and the establish-

ment of French supremacy in Italy. Napoleon's career on the banks of the Po was so brilliant, unexpected, and startling, that his nation was filled with equal astonishment and admiration. Instead of predicted ruin, there was unexampled victory. The enthusiasm of the French was unbounded. Had Napoleon died at the Bridge of Lodi, he would have passed down in history as a Judas Maccabeus. In this campaign he won the hearts of his soldiers, and secured the admiration of his generals. There was something new in his system of fighting, not seen at least in modern times, — a rapid massing of his troops, and a still more rapid concentration of them upon the weak points of the enemy's lines, coming down on them like a mountain torrent, and sweeping everything before him, in defiance of all rules and precedents. A new master in the art of war, greater than Condé, or Turenne, or Marlborough, or Frederic II., had suddenly arisen, with amazing audacity and faith in himself.

The deliverance of republican France from four great Austrian armies was a grand service; and Napoleon merited its gratitude and all the honors he received. He had violated no trust thus far. He was still Citizen Bonaparte, professing liberal principles, and fighting under the flag of liberty, to make the Republic respected, independent, and powerful. He robbed Italy, it is true, of some of her valuable pictures, and exacted

heavy contributions; but this is war. He was still the faithful servant of France.

On his return to Paris as a conqueror, the people of course were enthusiastic in their praises, and the Government was jealous. It had lost the confidence of the nation. All eyes were turned upon the fortunate soldier who had shown so much ability, and who had given glory to the country. He may not yet have meditated usurpation, but he certainly had dreams of power. He was bent on rising to a greater height; but he could do nothing at present, nor did he feel safe in Paris amid so much envy, although he lived simply and shunned popular idolatry. But his restless nature craved activity; so he sought and obtained an army for the invasion of Egypt. He was inspired with a passion of conquest, and the Directory was glad to get rid of so formidable a rival.

He had plainly rendered to his country two great services, without tarnishing his own fame, or being false to his cause. But what excuse had he to give to the bar of enlightened posterity for the invasion of Egypt? The idea originated with himself. It was not a national necessity. It was simply an unwarrantable war: it was a crime; it was a dream of conquest, without anything more to justify it than Alexander's conquests in India, or any other conquest by ambitious and restless warriors. He hoped to play the part of

Alexander, — to found a new empire in the East. It was his darling scheme. It would give him power, and perhaps sovereignty. Some patriotic notions may have blended with his visions. Perhaps he would make a new route to India; perhaps cut off the empire of the English in the East; perhaps plant colonies among worn-out races; perhaps destroy the horrid empire of the Turks; perhaps make Constantinople the seat of French influence and empire in the East. But what harm had Turkey or Syria or Egypt done to France? Did they menace the peace of Europe? Did even suffering Egyptians call upon him to free them from a Turkish yoke? No: it was a meditated conquest, on the same principles of ambition and aggrandizement which ever have animated unlawful conquests, and therefore a political crime; not to be excused because other nations have committed such crimes, ultimately overruled to the benefit of civilization, like the conquest of India by England, and Texas by the United States.

I will not dwell on this expedition, which failed through the watchfulness of the English, the naval victory of Nelson at the Nile, and the defence of Acre by Sir Sydney Smith. It was the dream of Napoleon at that time to found an empire in the East, of which he would be supreme; but he missed his destiny, and was obliged to return, foiled, baffled, and chagrined, to Paris; — his first great disappointment.

But he had lost no prestige, since he performed prodigies of valor, and covered up his disasters by lying bulletins. Here he first appeared as the arch-liar, which he was to the close of his career. In this expedition he rendered no services to his country or to civilization, except in the employment of scientific men to decipher the history of Egypt, — which showed that he had an enlightened mind.

During his absence disasters had overtaken France. Italy was torn from her grasp, her armies had been defeated, and Russia, Austria, and England were leagued for her overthrow. Insurrection was in the provinces, and dissensions raged in Paris. The Directory had utterly lost public confidence, and had shown no capacity to govern. All eyes were turned to the conqueror of Italy, and, as it was supposed, of Egypt also.

A *coup d'état* followed. Napoleon's soldiers drove the legislative body from the hall, and he assumed the supreme control, under the name of First Consul. Thus ended the Republic in December, 1799, after a brief existence of seven years. The usurpation of a soldier began, who trod the constitution and liberty under his iron feet. He did what Cæsar and Cromwell had done, on the plea of revolutionary necessity. He put back the march of liberty for nearly half a century. His sole excuse was that his undeniable usurpation was ratified by the votes of the French people, intoxicated by his

victories, and seeing no way to escape from the perils which surrounded them than under his supreme guidance. They parted with their liberties for safety. Had Napoleon been compelled to "wade through slaughter to his throne,"—as Cæsar did, as Augustus did,—there would have been no excuse for his usurpation, except the plea of Cæsar, that liberty was impossible, and the people needed the strong arm of despotism to sustain law and order. But Napoleon was more adroit; he appealed to the people themselves, recognizing them as the source of power, and they confirmed his usurpation by an overwhelming majority.

Since he was thus the people's choice, I will not dwell on the usurpation. He cheated them, however; for he invoked the principles of the Revolution, and they believed him,—as they afterwards did his nephew. They wanted a better executive government, and were willing to try him, since he had proved his abilities; but they did not anticipate the utter suppression of constitutional government,—they still had faith in the principles of their Revolution. They abhorred absolutism; they abhor it still; to destroy it they had risked their Revolution. To the principles of the Revolution the great body of French people have been true, when permitted to be, from the time when they hurled Louis XVI. from the throne. Absolutism with the consent of the French nation

has passed away forever, and never can be revived, any more than the oracles of Dodona or the bulls of Mediæval popes.

Now let us consider whether, as the executive of the French nation, he was true to the principles of the Revolution, which he invoked, and which that people have ever sought to establish.

In some respects, it must be confessed, he was, and in other respects he was not. He never sought to revive feudalism; all its abominations perished. He did not bring back the law of entail, nor unequal privileges, nor the *régime* of nobles. He ruled by the laws; rewarding merit, and encouraging what was obviously for the interests of the nation. The lives and property of the people were protected. The *idea* of liberty was never ignored. If liberty was suppressed to augment his power and cement his rule, it was in the name of public necessity, as an expression of the interests he professed to guard. When he incited his soldiers to battle, it was always under pretence of delivering enslaved nations and spreading the principles of the Revolution, whose product he was. And until he assumed the imperial title most of his acts were enlightened, and for the benefit of the people he ruled; there was no obvious oppression on the part of government, except to provide means to sustain the army, without which France must succumb to enemies. While he was First

Consul, it would seem that the hostility of Europe was more directed towards France herself for having expelled the Bourbons, than against him as a dangerous man. Europe could not forgive France for her Revolution, — not even England; Napoleon was but the necessity which the political complications arising from the Revolution seemed to create. Hence, the wars which Napoleon conducted while he was First Consul were virtually defensive, since all Europe aimed to put down France, — such a nest of assassins and communists and theorists! — rather than to put down Napoleon; for, although usurper, he was, strange to say, the nation's choice as well as idol. He reigned by the will of the nation, and he could not have reigned without. The nation gave him his power, to be wielded to protect France, in imminent danger from foreign powers.

And wisely and grandly did he use it at first. He turned his attention to the internal state of a distracted country, and developed its resources and promoted tranquillity; he appointed the ablest men, without distinction of party, for his ministers and prefects; he restored the credit of the country; he put a stop to forced loans; he released priests from confinement; he rebuked the fanaticism of the ultra-revolutionists; he reorganized the public bodies; he created tribunals of appeal; he ceased to confiscate the property of emigrants, and opened a way for their return; he

restored the right of disposing property by will; he instituted the Bank of France on sound financial principles; he checked all disorders; he brought to a close the desolating war of La Vendée; he retained what was of permanent value in the legislation of the Revolution; he made the distribution of the public burdens easy; he paid his army, and rewarded eminent men, whom he enlisted in his service. So stable was the government, and so wise were the laws, and so free were all channels of industry, that prosperity returned to the distracted country. The middle classes were particularly benefited, — the shopkeepers and mechanics, — and they acquiesced in a strong rule, since it seemed beneficent. The capital was enriched and adorned and improved. A treaty with the Pope was made, by which the clergy were restored to their parishes. A new code of laws was made by great jurists, on the principles of the Justinian Code. A magnificent road was constructed over the Alps. Colonial possessions were recovered. Navies were built, fortifications repaired, canals dug, and the beet-root and tobacco cultivated.

But these internal improvements, by which France recovered prosperity, paled before the services which Napoleon rendered as a defender of his country's nationality. He had proposed a peace-policy to England in an autograph letter to the King, which was treated

as an insult, and answered by the British government by a declaration of war, to last till the Bourbons were restored, — perhaps what Napoleon wanted and expected; and war was renewed with Austria and England. The consulate was now marked by the brilliant Italian campaign, — the passage over the Alps; the battle of Marengo, gained by only thirty thousand men; the recovery of Italy, and renewed military *éclat*. The Peace of Amiens, October, 1801, placed Napoleon in the proudest position which any modern sovereign ever enjoyed. He was now thirty-three years of age, — supreme in France, and powerful throughout Europe. The French were proud of a man who was glorious both in peace and war; and his consulate had been sullied by only one crime, — the assassination of the heir of the house of Condé; a blunder, as Talleyrand said, rather than a crime, since it arrayed against him all the friends of Legitimacy in Europe.

Had Napoleon been contented with the power he then enjoyed as First Consul for life, and simply stood on the defensive, he could have made France invincible, and would have left a name comparatively reproachless. But we now see unmistakable evidence of boundless personal ambition, and a policy of unscrupulous aggrandizement. He assumes the imperial title, — greedy for the trappings as well as the reality of power; he openly founds a new dynasty of kings; he abolishes

every trace of constitutional rule; he treads liberty under his feet, and mocks the very ideas by which he had inspired enthusiasm in his troops; his watch-word is now not *Liberty*, but *Glory;* he centres in himself the interests of France; he surrounds himself, at the Tuileries, with the pomp and ceremonies of the ancient kings; and he even induces the Pope himself to crown him at Notre Dame. It was a proud day, December 2, 1804, when, surrounded by all that was brilliant and imposing in France, Napoleon proceeded in solemn procession to the ancient cathedral, where were assembled the magistrates, the bishops, and the titled dignitaries of the realm, and received, in his imperial robes, from the hands of the Pope, the consecrated sceptre and crown of empire, and heard from the lips of the supreme pontiff of Christendom those words which once greeted Charlemagne in the basilica of St. Peter when the Roman clergy proclaimed him Emperor of the West, — *Vivat in eternum semper Augustus.* The venerable aisles and pillars and arches of the ancient cathedral resounded to the music of five hundred performers in a solemn *Te Deum.* The sixty prelates of France saluted the anointed soldier as their monarch, while the inspiring cry from the vast audience of *Vive l'Empereur!* announced Napoleon's entrance into the circle of European sovereigns.

But this fresh usurpation, although confirmed by a

vote of the French people, was the signal for renewed hostilities. A coalition of all governments unfriendly to France was formed. Military preparations assumed a magnitude never seen before in the history of Europe, which now speedily became one vast camp. Napoleon quit his capital to assume the conduct of armies. He had threatened England with invasion, which he knew was impossible, for England then had nearly one thousand ships of war, manned by one hundred and twenty thousand men. But when Napoleon heard of the victories of Nelson, he suddenly and rapidly marched to the Rhine, and precipitated one hundred and eighty thousand troops upon Austria, who was obliged to open her capital. Then, reinforced by Russia, Austria met the invader at Austerlitz with equal forces; but only to suffer crushing defeat. Pitt died of a broken heart when he heard of this decisive French victory, followed shortly after by the disastrous overthrow of the Prussians at Jena, and that, again, by the victory of Eylau over the Russians, which secured the peace of Tilsit, 1807, — making Napoleon supreme on the continent of Europe at the age of thirty-nine. It was deemed idle to resist further this "man of destiny," who in twelve years, from the condition of an unemployed officer of artillery, without friends or family or influence, had subdued in turn all the monarchies of Europe, with the exception of

England and Russia, and regulated at his pleasure the affairs of distant courts. To what an eminence had he climbed! Nothing in history or romance approaches the facts of his amazing career.

And even down to this time — to the peace of Tilsit — there are no grave charges against him which history will not extenuate, aside from the egotism of his character. He claims that he fought for French nationality, in danger from the united hostilities of Europe. Certainly his own glory was thus far identified with the glory of his country. He had rescued France by a series of victories more brilliant than had been achieved for centuries. He had won a fame second to that of no conqueror in the world's history.

But these astonishing successes seem to have turned his head. He is dazzled by his own greatness, and intoxicated by the plaudits of his idolaters. He proudly and coldly says that "it is a proof of the weakness of the human understanding for any one to dream of resisting him." He now aims at a universal military monarchy; he seeks to make the kings of the earth his vassals; he places the members of his family, whether worthy or unworthy, on ancient thrones; he would establish on the banks of the Seine that central authority which once emanated from Rome; he apes the imperial Cæsars in the arrogance of his tone and the insolence of his demands; he looks upon Europe as

belonging to himself; he becomes a tyrant of the race; he centres in the gratification of his passions the interests of humanity; he becomes the angry Nemesis of Europe, indifferent to the sufferings of mankind and the peace of the world.

After the peace of Tilsit his whole character seems to have changed, even in little things. No longer is he affable and courteous, but silent, reserved, and sullen. His temper becomes bad; his brow is usually clouded; his manners are brusque; his egotism is transcendent. "Your first duty," said he to his brother Louis, when he made him king of Holland, "is to *me;* your second, to France." He becomes intolerably haughty, even to the greatest personages. He insults the ladies of the court, and pinches their ears, so that they feel relieved when he has passed them by. He no longer flatters, but expects incense from everybody. In his bursts of anger he breaks china and throws his coat into the fire. He turns himself into a master of ceremonies; he cheats at cards; he persecutes literary men.

Napoleon's career of crime is now consummated. He divorces Josephine, — the greatest mistake of his life. He invades Spain and Russia, against the expostulations of his wisest counsellors, showing that he has lost his head, that reason has toppled on her throne, — for he fancies himself more powerful than the forces of Nature. All these crimes are utterly inex-

cusable, except on the plea of madness. Such gigantic crimes, such a recklessness of life, such uncontrollable ambition, such a defiance of justice, such an abrogation of treaties, such a disregard of the interests of humanity, to say nothing of the welfare of France, prostituted, enslaved, down-trodden, — and all to nurse his diabolical egotism, — astonished and shocked the whole civilized world. These things more than balanced all the services he ever rendered, since they directly led to the exhaustion of his country. They were so atrocious that they cried aloud to Heaven for vengeance.

And Heaven heard the agonizing shrieks of misery which ascended from the smoking ruins of Moscow, from the bloody battle-field of Borodino, from the river Berezina, from the homes of the murdered soldiers, from the widows and orphans of more than a million of brave men who had died to advance his glory, from the dismal abodes of twenty-five millions more whom he had cheated out of their liberties and mocked with his ironical proclamations; yea, from the millions in Prussia, Austria, and England who had been taxed to the uttermost to defeat him, and had died martyrs to the cause of nationalities, or what we call the Balance of Power, which European statesmen have ever found it necessary to maintain at any cost, since on this balance hang the interests of feeble and defence-

less nations. Ay, Heaven heard, — the God whom he ignored, — and sent a retribution as signal and as prompt and as awful as his victories had been overwhelming.

I need not describe Napoleon's fall, — as clear a destiny as his rise; a lesson to all the future tyrants and conquerors of the world; a moral to be pondered as long as history shall be written. Hear, ye heavens! and give ear, O earth! to the voice of eternal justice, as it appealed to universal consciousness, and pronounced the doom of the greatest sinner of modern times, — to be defeated by the aroused and indignant nations, to lose his military prestige, to incur unexampled and bitter humiliation, to be repudiated by the country he had raised to such a pitch of greatness, to be dethroned, to be imprisoned at Elba, to be confined on the rock of St. Helena, to be at last forced to meditate, and to die with vultures at his heart, — a chained Prometheus, rebellious and defiant to the last, with a world exultant at his fall; a hopeless and impressive fall, since it broke for fifty years the charm of military glory, and showed that imperialism cannot be endured among nations craving for liberties and rights which are the birthright of our humanity.

Did Napoleon, then, live in vain? No great man lives in vain. He is ever, whether good or bad, the instrument of Divine Providence. Gustavus Adolphus

was the instrument of God in giving religious liberty to Germany. William the Silent was His instrument in achieving the independence of Holland. Washington was His instrument in giving dignity and freedom to this American nation, this home of the oppressed, this glorious theatre for the expansion of unknown energies and the adoption of unknown experiments. Napoleon was His instrument in freeing France from external enemies, and for vindicating the substantial benefits of an honest but uncontrolled Revolution. He was His instrument in arousing Italy from the sleep of centuries, and taking the first step to secure a united nation and a constitutional government. He was His instrument in overthrowing despotism among the petty kings of Germany, and thus showing the necessity of a national unity, — at length realized by the genius of Bismarck. Even in his crimes Napoleon stands out on the sublime pages of history as the instrument of Providence, since his crimes were overruled in the hatred of despotism among his own subjects, and a still greater hatred of despotism as exercised by those kings who finally subdued him, and who vainly attempted to turn back the progress of liberal sentiments by their representatives at the Congress of Vienna.

The fall of Napoleon taught some awful and impressive lessons to humanity, which would have been unlearned had he continued to be successful to the

end. It taught the utter vanity of military glory; that peace with neighbors is the greatest of national blessings, and war the greatest of evils; that no successes on the battle-field can compensate for the miseries of an unjust and unnecessary war; and that avenging justice will sooner or later overtake the wickedness of a heartless egotism. It taught the folly of worshipping mere outward strength, disconnected from goodness; and, finally, it taught that God will protect defenceless nations, and even guilty nations, when they shall have expiated their crimes and follies, and prove Himself the kind Father of all His children, even amid chastisements, gradually leading them, against their will, to that blessed condition when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, and nations shall learn war no more.

What remains to-day of those grand Napoleonic ideas which intoxicated France for twenty years, and which, revived by Louis Napoleon, led to a brief glory and an infamous fall, and the humiliation and impoverishment of the most powerful state of Europe? They are synonymous with imperialism, personal government, the absolute reign of a single man, without constitutional checks, — a return to Cæsarism, to the unenlightened and selfish despotism of Pagan Rome. And hence they are now repudiated by France herself, — as well as by England and America, — as false,

as selfish, as fatal to all true national progress, as opposed to every sentiment which gives dignity to struggling States, as irreconcilably hostile to the civilization which binds nations together, and which slowly would establish liberty, and peace, and industry, and equal privileges, and law, and education, and material prosperity, upon this fallen world.

AUTHORITIES.

So much has been written on Napoleon, that I can only select some of the standard and accessible works. Bourrienne's Memoirs of Napoleon I.; L. P. Junot's Memoirs of Napoleon, Court, and Family; Las Casas' Napoleon at St. Helena; Thiers' History of the Consulate and the Empire; Memoirs of Prince Metternich; Segur's History of Expedition to Russia; Memoirs of Madame de Rémusat; Vieusseau's Napoleon, his Sayings and Deeds; Napoleon's Confidential Correspondence with Josephine and with his Brother Joseph; Alison's History of Europe; Lockhart's and Sir Walter Scott's Lives of Napoleon; Court and Camp of Napoleon, in Murray's Family Library; W. Forsyth's Captivity at St. Helena; Dr. Channing's Essay on Napoleon; Lord Brougham's Sketch of Napoleon; J. G. Wilson's Sketch of Napoleon; Life of Napoleon, by A. H. Jomini; Headley's Napoleon and his Marshals; Napier's Peninsular War; Wellington's Despatches; Gifford's Life of Pitt; Botta's History of Italy under Napoleon; Labaume's Russian Campaign; Berthier's Histoire de l'Expédition d'Egypte.

XLVIII.

DANIEL WEBSTER.

THE AMERICAN UNION.

A. D. 1782–1852.

XLVIII.

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IF I were required to single out the most prominent political genius in the history of the United States, after the death of Hamilton, I should say it was Daniel Webster. He reigned for thirty years as a political dictator to his party, and at the same time was the acknowledged head of the American Bar. He occupied two spheres, in each of which he gained pre-eminence. But for envy, and the enemies he made, he probably would have reached the highest honor that the nation had to bestow. His influence was vast, until those discussions arose which provoked one of the most gigantic wars of modern times. For a generation he was the object of universal admiration for his eloquence and power. In political wisdom and experience he had no contemporaneous superior; there was no public man from 1820 to 1850 who had so great a prestige, and whose name and labors are so well remembered. His speeches and forensic arguments are

more often quoted than those of any other statesman and lawyer the country has produced. His works are in every library, and are still read. His fame has not waned, in spite of the stirring events which have taken place since his death. Great generals have arisen and passed out of mind, but the name and memory of Webster are still fresh. Amid the tumults and parties of the war he foresaw and dreaded, his glory may have passed through an eclipse, but his name is to-day one of the proudest connected with our history. Living men, occupying great official positions, are of course more talked about and thought of than he; but of those illustrious characters who figured in public affairs a generation ago, no one has so great a posthumous fame and influence as the distinguished senator from Massachusetts. No man since the days of Jefferson is seated on a loftier pedestal; and no one is likely to live longer, if not in the nation's heart, yet in its admiration for intellectual superiority and respect for political services. While he reigned as a political oracle for more than thirty years, — almost an idol in the eyes of his constituents, — it was his misfortune to be dethroned and reviled, in the last ten years of his life, by the very people who had exalted and honored him, and at last to die broken-hearted, from the loss of his well-earned popularity and the failure of his ambitious expectations. His life is sad as well as

proud, like that of so many other great men who at one time led, and at another time opposed, popular sentiments. Their names stand out on every page of history, examples of the mutability of fortune, — alike joyous and saddened men, reaping both glory and shame; and sometimes glory for what is evil, and shame for what is good.

When Daniel Webster was born, — 1782, in Salisbury, New Hampshire, near the close of our Revolutionary struggle, — there were very few prominent and wealthy families in New England, very few men more respectable than the village lawyers, doctors, and merchants, or even thrifty and intelligent farmers. Very few great fortunes had been acquired, and these chiefly by the merchants of Boston, Salem, Portsmouth, and other seaports whose ships had penetrated to all parts of the world. Webster sprang from the agricultural class, — larger then in proportion to the other classes than now at the East, — at a time when manufactures were in their infancy and needed protection; when travel was limited; when it was a rare thing for a man to visit Europe; when the people were obliged to practise the most rigid economy; when everybody went to church; when religious scepticism sent those who avowed it to Coventry; when ministers were the leading power; when the press was feeble, and elections were not controlled by foreign immigrants; when men drank rum instead of whiskey,

and lager beer had never been heard of, nor the great inventions and scientific wonders which make our age an era had anywhere appeared. The age of progress had scarcely then set in, and everybody was obliged to work in some way to get an honest living; for the Revolutionary War had left the country poor, and had shut up many channels of industry. The farmers at that time were the most numerous and powerful class, sharp, but honest and intelligent; who honored learning, and enjoyed discussions on metaphysical divinity. Their sons did not then leave the paternal acres to become clerks in distant cities; nor did their daughters spend their time in reading French novels, or sneering at rustic duties and labors. This age of progress had not arisen when everybody looks forward to a millennium of idleness and luxury, or to a fortune acquired by speculation and gambling rather than by the sweat of the brow, — an age, in many important respects, justly extolled, especially for scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions, yet not remarkable for religious earnestness or moral elevation.

The life of Daniel Webster is familiar to all intelligent people. His early days were spent amid the toils and blessedness of a New England farm-house, favored by the teachings of intelligent, God-fearing parents, who had the means to send him to Phillips Academy in Exeter, then recently founded, where he

fitted for college, and shortly after entered Dartmouth, at the age of fifteen. In connection with Webster, I do not read of any remarkable precocity, at school or college, such as marked Cicero, Macaulay, and Gladstone; but it seems that he won the esteem of both teachers and students, and was regarded as a very promising youth. After his graduation he taught an academy at Fryeburg, for a time, and then began the study of the law, — first at Salisbury, and subsequently in Boston, in the office of the celebrated Governor Gore. He was admitted to the bar in 1805, and established himself in Boscawen, but soon afterwards removed to Portsmouth, where he entered on a large practice, encountering such able lawyers as Jeremiah Mason and Jeremiah Smith, who both became his friends and admirers, for Webster's legal powers were soon the talk of the State. At the early age of thirty-one he entered Congress (1813), and took the whole House by surprise with his remarkable speeches, during the war with Great Britain, — on such topics as the enlargement of the navy, the repeal of the embargo, and the complicated financial questions of the day. In 1815 he retired awhile from public life, and removed to Boston, where he enjoyed a lucrative practice. In 1822 he re-entered Congress. So popular was he at this time, that, on his re-election to Congress in 1824, he received four thousand nine hundred and ninety votes out of five

thousand votes cast. In 1827 he entered the Senate, where he was to reign as one of its greatest chiefs, — the idol of his party in New England, practising his profession at the same time, a leader of the American Bar, and an oracle in politics on all constitutional questions.

With this rapid sketch, I proceed to enumerate the services of Daniel Webster to his country, since on these enduring fame and gratitude are based. And first, I allude to his career as a lawyer, — not a narrow, technical lawyer, seeking to gain his case any way he can, with an eye on pecuniary rewards alone, but a lawyer devoting himself to the study of great constitutional questions and fundamental principles. In his legal career, when for nearly forty years he discussed almost every issue that can arise between individuals and communities, some half-a-dozen cases have become historical, because of the importance of the principles and interests involved. In the Gibbons and Ogden case he assumed the broad ground that the grant of power to regulate commerce was exclusively the right of the General Government. William Wirt, his distinguished antagonist, — then in the height of his fame, — relied on the coasting license given by States; but the lucid and luminous arguments of the young lawyer astonished the court, and made old Judge Marshall lay

down his pen, drop back in his chair, turn up his coat-cuffs, and stare at the speaker in amazement at his powers.

The first great case which gave Webster a national reputation was that pertaining to Dartmouth College, his *alma mater*, which he loved as Newton loved Cambridge. The college was in the hands of politicians, and Webster recovered the college from their hands and restored it to the trustees, laying down such broad principles that every literary and benevolent institution in this land will be grateful to him forever. This case, which was argued with consummate ability, and with words as eloquent as they were logical and lucid, melting a cold court into tears, placed Webster in the front rank of lawyers, which he kept until he died. In the Ogden and Saunders case he settled the constitutionality of State bankrupt laws; in that of the United States Bank he maintained the right of a citizen of one State to perform any legal act in another; in that which related to the efficacy of Stephen Girard's will, he demonstrated the vital importance of Christianity to the success of free institutions, — so that this very college, which excluded clergymen from being teachers in it, or even visiting it, has since been presided over by laymen of high religious character, like Judge Jones and Doctor Allen. In the Rhode Island case he proved the right of a State to modify its own institutions of government.

In the Knapp murder case he brought out the power of conscience — the voice of God to the soul — with such terrible forensic eloquence that he was the admiration of all Christian people. No better sermon was ever preached than this appeal to the conscience of men.

In these and other cases he settled very difficult and important questions, so that the courts of law will long be ruled by his wisdom. He enriched the science of jurisprudence itself by bringing out the fundamental laws of justice and equity on which the whole science rests. He was not as learned as he was logical and comprehensive. His greatness as a lawyer consisted in seeing and seizing some vital point not obvious, or whose importance was not perceived by his opponent, and then bringing to bear on this point the whole power of his intellect. His knowledge was marvellous on those points essential to his argument; but he was not probably learned, like Kent, in questions outside his cases, — I mean the details and technicalities of law. He did, however, know the fundamental principles on which his great cases turned, and these he enforced with much eloquence and power, so that his ablest opponents quailed before him. Perhaps his commanding presence and powerful tones and wonderful eye had something to do with his success at the Bar as well as in the Senate, — a brow, a voice, and an eye that meant war when he was fairly

aroused; although he appealed generally to reason, without tricks of rhetoric. If he sometimes intimidated, he rarely resorted to exaggerations, but confined himself strictly to the facts, so that he seemed the fairest of men. This moderation had great weight with an intelligent jury and with learned judges. He always paid great deference to the court, and was generally courteous to his opponents. Of all his antagonists at the Bar, perhaps it was Jeremiah Mason and Rufus Choate whom he most dreaded; yet both of these great men were his warm friends. Warfare at the Bar does not mean personal animosity, — it is generally mutual admiration, except in the antagonism of such rivals as Hamilton and Burr. Webster's admiration for Wirt, Pinkney, Curtis, and Mason was free from all envy; in fact, Webster was too great a man for envy, and great lawyers were those whom he loved best, whom he felt to be his brethren, not secret enemies. His admiration for Jeremiah Mason was only equalled by that for Judge Marshall, who was not a rival. Webster praised Marshall as he might have Erskine or Lyndhurst.

Mr. Webster, again, attained to great eminence in another sphere, in which lawyers have not always succeeded, — that of popular oratory, in the shape of speeches and lectures and orations to the people directly. In this sphere I doubt if he ever had an equal in this country,

although Edward Everett, Rufus Choate, Wendell Phillips, and others were distinguished for their popular eloquence, and in some respects were the equals of Webster. But he was a great teacher of the people, directly, — a sort of lecturer on the principles of government, of finance, of education, of agriculture, of commerce. He was superbly eloquent in his eulogies of great men like Adams and Jefferson. His Bunker Hill and Plymouth addresses are immortal. He lectured occasionally before lyceums and literary institutions. He spoke to farmers in their agricultural meetings, and to merchants in marts of commerce. He did not go into political campaigns to any great extent, as is now the custom with political leaders on the eve of important elections. He did not seek to show the people how they should vote, so much as to teach them elemental principles. He was the oracle, the sage, the teacher, — not the politician.

In the popular assemblies — whether for the discussion of political truths or those which bear on literature, education, history, finance, or industrial pursuits — Mr. Webster was pre-eminent. What audiences were ever more enthusiastic than those that gathered to hear his wisdom and eloquence in public halls or in the open air? It is true that in his later years he lost much of his wonderful personal magnetism, and did not rise to public expectation except on great

occasions; but in middle life, in the earlier part of his congressional career, he had no peer as a popular orator. Edward Everett, on some occasions, was his equal, so far as manner and words were concerned; but, on the whole, even in his grandest efforts, Everett was cold compared with Webster in his palmy days. He never touched the heart and reason as did Webster; although it must be conceded that Everett was a great rhetorician, and was master of many of the graces of oratory.

The speeches and orations of Webster were not only weighty in matter, but were wonderful for their style, — so clear, so simple, so direct, that everybody could understand him. He rarely attempted to express more than one thought in a single sentence; so that his sentences never wearied an audience, being always logical and precise, not involved and long and complicated, like the periods of Chalmers and Choate and so many of the English orators. It was only in his grand perorations that he was Ciceronian. He despised purely extemporary efforts; he did not believe in them. He admits somewhere that he never could make a good speech without careful preparation. The principles embodied in his famous reply to Colonel Hayne of South Carolina, in the debate in the Senate on the right of "nullification," had lain brooding in his mind for eighteen months. To a young minister

he said, There is no such thing as extemporaneous acquisition.

Webster's speeches are likely to live for their style alone, outside their truths, like those of Cicero and Demosthenes, like the histories of Voltaire and Macaulay, like the essays of Pascal and Rousseau; and they will live, not only for both style and matter, but for the exalted patriotism which burns in them from first to last, for those sentiments which consecrate cherished institutions. How nobly he recognizes Christianity as the bulwark of national prosperity! How delightfully he presents the endearments of home, the certitudes of friendship, the peace of agricultural life, the repose of all industrial pursuits, however humble and obscure! It was this fervid patriotism, this public recognition of what is purest in human life, and exalted in aspirations, and profound in experience, — teaching the value of our privileges and the glory of our institutions, — which gave such effect to his eloquence, and endeared him to the hearts of the people until he opposed their passions. If we read any of these speeches, extending over thirty years, we shall find everywhere the same consistent spirit of liberty, of union, of conciliation, the same moral wisdom, the same insight into great truths, the same recognition of what is sacred, the same repose on what is permanent, the same faith in the expanding glories of this great nation which he

loved with all his heart. In all his speeches one cannot find a sentence which insults the consecrated sentiments of religion or patriotism. He never casts a fling at Christianity; he never utters a sarcasm in reference to revealed truths; he never flippantly aspires to be wiser than Moses or Paul in reference to theological dogmas. "Ah, my friends," said he, in 1825, "let us remember that it is only religion and morals and knowledge that can make men respectable and happy under any form of government; that no government is respectable which is not just; that without unspotted purity of public faith, without sacred public principle, fidelity, and honor, no mere form of government, no machinery of laws, can give dignity to political society."

Thus did he discourse in those proud days when he was accepted as a national idol and a national benefactor, — those days of triumph and of victory, when the people gathered around him as they gather around a successful general. Ah! how they thronged to the spot where he was expected to speak, — as the Scotch people thronged to Edinboro' and Glasgow to hear Gladstone: —

> "And when they saw his chariot but appear,
> Did they not make an universal shout,
> That Tyber trembled underneath her banks,
> To hear the replication of their sounds
> Made in her concave shores?"

But it is time that I allude to those great services which Webster rendered to his country when he was a member of Congress, — services that can never be forgotten, and which made him a national benefactor.

There were three classes of subjects on which his genius pre-eminently shone, — questions of finance, the development of American industries, and the defence of the Constitution.

As early as 1815, Mr. Webster acquired a national reputation by his speech on the proposition to establish a national bank, which he opposed, since it was to be relieved from the necessity of redeeming its notes in specie. This was at the close of the war with Great Britain, when the country was poor, business prostrated, and the finances disordered. To relieve this pressure, many wanted an inflated paper currency, which should stimulate trade. But all this Mr. Webster opposed, as certain to add to the evils it was designed to cure. He would have a bank, indeed, but he insisted it should be established on sound financial principles, with notes redeemable in gold and silver. And he brought a great array of facts to show the certain and utter failure of a system of banking operations which disregarded the fundamental financial laws. He maintained that an inflated currency produced only temporary and illusive benefits. Nor did he believe in hopes which were not sustained by expe-

rience. "Banks," said he, "are not revenue. They may afford facilities for its collection and distribution, but they cannot be sources of national income, which must flow from deeper fountains. Whatever bank-notes are not convertible into gold and silver, at the will of the holder, become of less value than gold and silver. No solidity of funds, no confidence in banking operations, has ever enabled them to keep up their paper to the value of gold and silver any longer than they paid gold and silver on demand." Similar sentiments he advanced, in 1816, in his speech on the legal currency, and also in 1832, when he said that a disordered currency is one of the greatest of political evils, — fatal to industry, frugality, and economy. "It fosters the spirit of speculation and extravagance. It is the most effectual of inventions to fertilize the rich man's field by the sweat of the poor man's brow." In these days, when principles of finance are better understood, these remarks may seem like platitudes; but they were not so fifty or sixty years ago, for then they had the force of new truth, although even then they were the result of political wisdom, based on knowledge and experience; and his views were adopted, for he appealed to reason.

Webster's financial speeches are very calm, like the papers of Hamilton and Jay in "The Federalist," but as interesting and persuasive as those of Gladstone,

the greatest finance-minister of modern times. They are plain, simple, direct, without much attempt at rhetoric. He spoke like a great lawyer to a bench of judges. The solidity and soundness of his views made him greatly respected, and were remarkable in a young man of thirty-four. The subsequent financial history of the country shows that he was prophetic. All his predictions have come to pass. What is more marked in our history than the extravagance and speculation attending the expansion of paper money irredeemable in gold and silver? What misery and disappointment have resulted from inflated values! It was doubtless necessary to do without gold and silver in our life-and-death struggle with the South; but it was nevertheless a misfortune, seen in the gambling operations and the wild fever of speculation which attended the immense issue of paper money after the war. The bubble was sure to burst, sooner or later, like John Law's Mississippi scheme in the time of Louis XV. How many thousands thought themselves rich, in New York and Chicago, in fact everywhere, when they were really poor, — as any man is poor when his house or farm is not worth the mortgage. As soon as we returned to gold and silver, or it was known we should return to them, then all values shrunk, and even many a successful merchant found he was really no richer than he was before the war.

It had been easy to secure heavy mortgages on inflated values, and also to get a great interest on investments; but when these mortgages and investments shrank to what they were really worth, the holders of them became embarrassed and impoverished. The fit of commercial intoxication was succeeded by depression and unhappiness, and the moral evils of inflated values were greater than the financial, since of all demoralizing things the spirit of speculation and gambling brings, at last, the most dismal train of disappointments and miseries. Inflation and uncertainty in values, whether in stocks or real estate, alternating with the return of prosperity, seem to have marked the commercial and financial history of this country during the last fifty years, more than that of any other nation under the sun, and given rise to the spirit of extravagant speculations, both disgraceful and ruinous.

Equally remarkable were Mr. Webster's speeches on tariffs and protective industries. He here seemed to borrow from Alexander Hamilton, who is the father of our protective system. Here he co-operated with Henry Clay; and the result of his eloquence and wisdom on those great principles of political economy was the adherence to a policy — against great opposition — which built up New England and did not impoverish the West. Where would the towns of Lowell, Man-

chester, and Lawrence have been without the aid extended to manufacturing interests? They made the nation comparatively independent of other nations; they enriched the country, even as manufactures enriched Great Britain and France. What would England be if it were only an agricultural country? It would have been impossible to establish manufactures of textile fabrics, without protection. Without aid from governments, this branch of American industry would have had no chance to contend with the cheap labor of European artisans. I do not believe in cheap labor. I do not believe in reducing intelligent people to the condition of animals. I would give them the chance to rise; and they cannot rise if they are doomed to labor for a mere pittance. The more wages men can get for honest labor, the better is the condition of the whole country. Withdraw protection from infant industries, and either they perish, or those who work in them sink to the condition of the laboring classes of Europe. Nor do I believe it is a good thing for a nation to have all its eggs in one basket. I would not make this country exclusively agricultural because we have boundless fields and can raise corn cheap, any more than I would recommend a Minnesota farmer to raise nothing but wheat. Insects and mildews and unexpected heats may blast a whole harvest, and the farmer has nothing to fall back upon. He may make

more money, for a time, by raising wheat exclusively; but he impoverishes his farm. He should raise cattle and sheep and grass and vegetables, as well as wheat or corn. Then he is more independent and more intelligent, even as a nation is by various industries, which call out all kinds of talent.

I know that this is a controverted point. Everything *is* controverted in political economy. There is scarcely a question which is settled in its whole range of subjects; and I know that many intellectual and enlightened men are in favor of what they call free-trade, especially professors in colleges. But there is no such thing as free-trade, strictly, in any nation, or in the history of nations. No nation legislates for universal humanity on philanthropic principles; it legislates for itself. There is no country where there are not high duties on some things, not even England. No nation can be governed on abstract principles and in disregard of its necessities. When it was for the interest of England to remove duties on corn, in order that manufactures might be stimulated, they took off duties on corn, because the laboring classes in the mills had to be fed. Agricultural interests gave way, for a time, to manufacturing interests, because the wealth of the country was based on them rather than on lands, and because landlords did not anticipate that bread-stuffs brought from this country would interfere with the

value of their rents. But England, with all her proud and selfish boasts about free-trade, may yet have to take a retrograde course, like France and Prussia, or her landed interests may be imperilled. The English aristocracy, who rule the country, cannot afford to have the value of their lands reduced one half, for those lands are so heavily mortgaged that such a reduction of value would ruin them; nor will they like to be forced to raise vegetables rather than wheat, and turn themselves into market-gardeners instead of great proprietors. The landlords of Great Britain may yet demand protection for themselves, and, as they control Parliament, they will look out for themselves by enacting measures of protection, unless they are intimidated by the people who demand cheap bread, or unless they submit to revolution. It is eternal equity and wisdom that the weak should be protected. There may be industries strong enough now to dispense with protection; but unless they are assisted when they are feeble, they will cease to exist at all. Take our shipping, for instance, with foreign ports, — it is not merely crippled, it is almost annihilated. Is it desirable to cut off that great arm of national strength? Shall we march on to our destiny, blind and lame and halt? What will we do if England and other countries shall find it necessary to protect themselves from impoverishment, and reintroduce duties on bread-stuffs high

enough to make the culture of wheat profitable? Where then will our farmers find a market for their superfluous corn, except to those engaged in industries which we should crush by removing protection?

I maintain that Mr. Webster, in defending our various industries with so much ability, for the benefit of the nation on the whole, rendered very important services, even as Hamilton and Clay did; although the solid South, wishing cheap labor, and engaged exclusively in agriculture, was opposed to him. The independent South would have established free-trade, — as Mr. Calhoun advocated, and as any enlightened statesman would advocate, when any interest can stand alone and defy competition, as was the case with the manufactures of Great Britain fifty years ago. The interests of the South and those of the North, under the institution of slavery, were not identical; indeed, they had been in fierce opposition for more than fifty years. Mr. Webster was, in his arguments on tariffs and cognate questions, the champion of the North, as Mr. Calhoun was of the South; and this opposition and antagonism gave great force to Webster's eloquence at this time. His sentences are short, interrogative, idiomatic. He is intensely in earnest. He grapples with sophistries and scatters them to the winds; both reason and passion vivify him.

This was the period of Webster's greatest popularity,

as the defender of Northern industries. This made him the idol of the merchants and manufacturers of New England. He made them rich; no wonder they made him presents. They ought, in gratitude, to have paid his debts over and over again. What if he did, in straitened circumstances, accept their aid? They owed to him more than he owed to them; and with all their favor and bounty Webster remained poor. He was never a rich man, but always an embarrassed man, because he had expensive tastes, like Cicero at Rome and Bacon in England. This, truly, was not to his credit; it was a flaw in his character; it involved him in debt, created enemies, and injured his reputation. It may have lessened his independence, and it certainly impaired his dignity. But there were also patriotic motives which prompted him, and which kept him poor. Had he devoted his great talents exclusively to the law, he might have been rich; but he gave his time to his country.

His greatest services to his country, however, were as the defender of the Constitution. Here he soared to the highest rank of political fame. Here he was a statesman, having in view the interests of the whole country. He never was what we call a politician. He never was such a miserable creature as that. I mean a mere politician, whose calling is the meanest a man can follow, since it seeks only spoils, and is a per-

petual deception, incompatible with all dignity and independence, whose only watchword is success.

Not such was Webster. He was too proud and too dignified for that form of degradation; and he perhaps sacrificed his popularity to his intellectual dignity, and the glorious consciousness of being a national benefactor, — as a real statesman seeks to be, and is, when he falls back on the elemental principles of justice and morality, like the present Premier of England, one of the most conscientious statesmen that ever controlled the destinies of a nation. Webster, like Burke, was haughty, austere, and brave; but such a man is not likely to remain the favorite of the people, who prefer an Alcibiades to a Cato, except in great crises, when they look to a man who can save them, and whom they can forget.

I cannot enumerate the magnificent bursts of eloquence which electrified the whole country when Webster stood out as the defender of the Constitution, when he combated secession and defended the Union. How noble and gigantic he was when he answered the aspersions of the Southern orators, — great men as they were, — and elaborately showed that the Union meant something more than a league of sovereign States! The great leaders of secession were overthrown in a contest which they courted, and in which they expected victory. His reply to Hayne is,

perhaps, the most masterly speech in American political history. It is one of the immortal orations of the world, extorting praise and admiration from Americans and foreigners alike. In his various encounters with Hayne, McDuffee, and Calhoun, he taught the principles of political union to the rising generation. He produced those convictions which sustained the North in its subsequent contest to preserve the integrity of the Nation. There can be no estimate of the services he rendered to the country by those grand and patriotic efforts. But for these, the people might have succumbed to the sophistries of Calhoun; for he was almost as great a giant as Webster, and was more faultless in his private life. He had an immense influence; he ruled the whole South; he made it solid. The speeches of Webster in the Senate made him the oracle of the North. He was not only the great champion of the North, and of Northern interests, but he was the teacher of the whole country. He expounded the principles of the Constitution,--that this great country is one, to be forever united in all its parts; that its stars and stripes were to float over every city and fortress in the land, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the river St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico, and "bearing for their motto no such miserable interrogatory as, What are all these worth? nor those other words of delusion and folly, Liberty

first and Union afterwards; but that other sentiment, dear to every American heart, Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!"

It was after his memorable speech in reply to Hayne that I saw Webster for the first time. I was a boy in college, and he had come to visit it; and well do I remember the unbounded admiration, yea, the veneration, felt for him by every young man in that college and throughout the town, — indeed, throughout the whole North, for he was the pride and glory of the land. It was then that they called him godlike, looking like an Olympian statue, or one of the creations of Michael Angelo when he wished to represent majesty and dignity and power in repose, — the most commanding human presence ever seen in the Capitol at Washington.

When we recall those patriotic and noble speeches which were read and admired by every merchant and farmer and lawyer in the country, and by which he produced great convictions and taught great lessons, we cannot but wonder why his glory was dimmed, and he was pulled down from his pedestal, and became no longer an idol. It is affirmed by many that it was his famous 7th of March speech which killed him, which disappointed his friends and alienated his constituents. I am therefore compelled to say something about that speech, and of his history at that time.

Mr. Webster was doubtless an ambitious man. He aspired to the presidency. And why not? It is and will be a great dignity, such as ought to be conferred on great ability and patriotism. Was he not able and patriotic? Had he not rendered great services? Was he not universally admired for his genius and experience and wisdom? Who was more prominent than he, among the statesmen of the country, or more thoroughly fitted to fulfil the duties of that high office? Was it not natural that he should have aspired to be one of the successors of Washington and Adams and Jefferson? He comprehended the honor and the dignity of that office. He did not seek it in order to divide its spoils, or to reward his friends; but he did wish to secure the highest prize that could be won by political services; he did desire to receive the highest honor in the gift of the people, even as Cicero sought the consulate at Rome; he did believe himself capable of representing the country in its most exacting position. It is nothing against a man that he is ambitious, provided his ambition is lofty. Most of the illustrious men of history have been ambitious, — Cromwell, Pitt, Thiers, Guizot, Bismarck, — but ambitious to be useful to their country, as well as to receive its highest rewards. Webster failed to reach the position he desired, because of his enemies, and, possibly, from jealousy of his towering height, — just

as Clay failed, and Aaron Burr, and Alexander Hamilton, and Stephen Douglas, and William H. Seward. The politicians, who control the people, prefer men in the presidential chair whom they think they can manage and use, not those to whom they will be forced to succumb. Webster was not a man to be controlled or used, and so the politicians rejected him. This he deeply felt, and even resented. His failure saddened his latter days and embittered his soul, although he was too proud to make loud complaints.

I grant he did not here show magnanimity. He thought that the presidency should be given to the ablest and most experienced statesman. He did not appear to see that this proud position is too commanding to be bestowed except for the most exalted services, and such services as attract the common eye, especially in war. Presidents in so great a country as this reign, like the old feudal kings, by the grace of God. They are selected by divine Providence, as David was from the sheepfold. No American, however great his genius, except the successful warrior, can ever hope to climb to this dizzy height, unless personal ambition is lost sight of in public services. This is wisely ordered, to defeat unscrupulous ambition. It is only in England that a man can rise to supreme power by force of genius, since he is selected virtually by his peers, and not by the popular voice. He who leads

Parliament is the real king of England for the time, since Parliament is omnipotent. Had Webster been an Englishman, and as powerful in the House of Commons as he was in Congress at one time, he might have been prime-minister. But he could not be president of the United States, although the presidential power is much inferior to that exercised by an English premier. It is the dignity of the office, not its power, which constitutes the value of the presidency. And Webster loved dignity even more than power.

In order to arrive at this coveted office, — although its duties probably would have been irksome, — it is possible that he sought to conciliate the South and win the favor of Southern leaders. But I do not believe he ever sought to win their favor by any abandonment of his former principles, or by any treachery to the cause he had espoused. Yet it is this of which he has been accused by his enemies, — many of those enemies his former friends. The real cause of this estrangement, and of all the accusations against him, was this, — he did not sympathize with the Abolition party; he was not prepared to embark in a crusade against slavery, the basal institution of the South. He did not like slavery; but he knew it to be an institution which the Constitution, of which he was the great defender, had accepted, — accepted as a compromise, in those dark days which tried men's souls. Many of the famous

statesmen who deliberated in that venerated hall in Philadelphia also disliked and detested slavery; but they could not have had a constitution, they could not have had a united country, unless that institution was acknowledged and guaranteed. So they accepted it as the lesser evil. They made a compromise, and the Constitution was signed. Now, everybody knows that the Abolitionists of the North, about the year 1833, attacked slavery, although it was guaranteed by the Constitution; attacked it, not as an evil merely, but as a sin; attacked it, by virtue of a higher law than constitutional provision. And as an evil, as a stain on our country, as an insult to the virtue and intelligence of the age, as a crime against humanity, these people of the North declared that slavery ought to be swept away. Mr. Webster, as well as Mr. Fillmore, Mr. Lincoln, Mr. Everett, and many other acknowledged patriots, was for letting slavery alone, as an evil too great to be removed without war; which, moreover, could not be removed without an infringement on what the South considered as its rights. He was for conciliation, in order to preserve the Constitution as well as the Union. The Abolitionists were violent in their denunciations. And although it took many years to permeate the North with their leaven, they were in earnest; and under persecutions and mobs and ostracism and contempt they persevered, until they created

a terrible public opinion. The South had early taken the alarm, and in order to protect their peculiar and favorite institution, had at various times attempted to extend it into newly acquired territories where it did not exist, claiming the protection of the Constitution. Mr. Webster was one of their foremost opponents in this, contesting their right to do it under the Constitution. But in 1848 the Antislavery opinion at the North crystallized in a political organization, — the Free-Soil Party; and on the other hand the South proposed to abrogate the Missouri Compromise of 1820 as an offset to the admission of California as a free State, and at the same time asked in further concession the passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill; and, in anticipation of failing to get these, threatened secession, which of course meant war.

It was at this crisis that Mr. Webster delivered his celebrated 7th of March speech, — in many respects his greatest, — in which he advocated conciliation and adherence to the Constitution, but which was represented to support Southern interests, which all his life he had opposed; and more, to advocate these interests, in order to secure Southern votes for the presidency. Some of the rich and influential men of Boston who disliked Webster for other reasons, — for he used to snub them, even after they had lent him money, — made the most they could of that speech, to alienate

the people. The Abolitionists, at last hostile to Mr. Webster, who stood in their way and would not adopt their dictation or advice, also bitterly denounced this speech, until it finally came to be regarded by the common people, few of whom ever read it, as a very unpatriotic production, entirely at variance with the views that Webster formerly advanced; and they forsook him.

Now, what is the real gist and spirit of that speech? The passions which agitated the country when it was delivered have passed away, and not only can we now calmly criticise it, but people will listen to the criticism with all the attention it deserves.

It is my opinion, shared by Peter Harvey and other friends of Mr. Webster, that in no speech he ever made are patriotic and Union sentiments more fully avowed. Said he, with fiery emphasis: —

"I hear with distress and anguish the word 'secession.' Secession! peaceable secession! Sir, your eyes and mine are never destined to see that miracle. The dismemberment of this great country without convulsion! The breaking up the fountains of the great deep without ruffling the surface! There can be no such thing as peaceable secession. It is an utter impossibility. Is this great Constitution, under which we live, to be melted and thawed away by secession, as the snows on the mountains are melted away under the influence of the vernal sun? No, sir; I see as plainly as the sun in

the heavens what that disruption must produce. I see it must produce war.

Peaceable secession! peaceable secession! What would be the result? Where is the line to be drawn? What States are to secede? What is to remain American? What am I to be? Am I to be an American no longer, — a sectional man, a local man, a separatist, with no country in common? Heaven forbid! Where is the flag of the Union to remain? Where is the eagle still to tower? What is to become of the army? What is to become of the navy? What is to become of the public lands? How is each of the thirty States to defend itself? Will you cut the Mississippi in two, leaving free States on its branches and slave States at its mouth? Can any one suppose that this population on its banks can be severed by a line that divides them from the territory of a foreign and alien government, down somewhere, — the Lord knows where, — upon the lower branches of the Mississippi? Sir, I dislike to pursue this subject. I have utter disgust for it. I would rather hear of national blasts and mildews and pestilence and famine, than hear gentlemen talk about secession. To break up this great government! To dismember this glorious country! To astonish Europe with an act of folly, such as Europe for two centuries has never beheld in any government! No, sir; such talk is enough to make the bones of Andrew Jackson turn round in his coffin."

Now, what are we to think of these sentiments, drawn from the 7th of March speech, so disgracefully

misrepresented by the politicians and the fanatics? Do they sound like bidding for Southern votes? Can any Union sentiments be stronger? Can anything be more decided or more patriotic? He warns, he entreats, he predicts like a prophet. He proves that secession is incompatible with national existence; he sees nothing in it but war. And of all things he dreaded and hated, it was war. He knew what war meant. He knew that a civil war would be the direst calamity. He would ward it off. He would be conciliating. He would take away the excuse of war, by adhering to the Constitution, — the written Constitution which our fathers framed, and which has been the admiration of the world, under which we have advanced to prosperity and glory as no nation ever before advanced.

But a large class regarded the Constitution as unsound, in some respects a wicked constitution, since it recognized slavery as an institution. By "the higher law," they would sweep slavery away, perhaps by moral means, but by endless agitations, until it was destroyed. Mr. Webster, I confess, did not like those agitations, since he knew they would end in war. He had a great insight, such as few people had at that time. But his prophetic insight was just what a large class of people did not like, especially in his own State. He uttered disagreeable truths, — as all prophets do, — and they took

up stones to stone him, — to stone him for the bravest act of his whole life, in which a transcendent wisdom appeared, and which will be duly honored when the truth shall be seen.

The fact was, at that time Mr. Webster seemed to be a croaker, a Jeremiah, as Burke at one time seemed to his generation, when he denounced the recklessness of the French Revolution. Very few people at the North dreamed of war. It was never supposed that the Southern leaders would actually become rebels. And they, on the other hand, never dreamed that the North would rise up solidly and put them down. And if war were to happen, it was supposed that it would be brief. Even so great and sagacious a statesman as Seward thought this. The South thought that it could easily whip the Yankees; and the North thought that it could suppress a Southern rebellion in six weeks. Both sides miscalculated. And so, in spite of warnings, the nation drifted into war; but as it turned out in the end it seems a providential event, — the way God took to break up slavery, the root and source of all our sectional animosities; a terrible but apparently necessary catastrophe, since more than a million of brave men perished, and more than five thousand millions of dollars were spent. Had the North been wise, it would have compensated the South for its slaves. Had the South been wise, it

would have accepted the compensation and set them free. But it was not to be. That issue could only be settled by the most terrible contest of modern times.

I will not dwell on that war, which Webster predicted and dreaded. I only wish to show that it was not for want of patriotism that he became unpopular, but because he did not fall in with the prevailing passions of the day, or with the public sentiment of the North in reference to slavery, not as to its evils and wickedness, but as to the way in which it was to be opposed. The great reforms of England, since the accession of William III., have been effected by using constitutional means, — not violence, not revolution, not war; but by an appeal to reason and intelligence and justice. No reforms in any nation have been greater and more glorious than those of the nineteenth century, — all effected by constitutional methods. Mr. Webster vainly attempted constitutional means. He was a lawyer. He reverenced the Constitution, with all its compromises. He would observe the law of contracts. Yet no man in the nation was more impatient than he at the threats of secession. He foretold that secession would lead to war. And if Mr. Webster had lived to see the war of which he had such anxious prescience, I firmly believe that he would have marched under the banner of the North with patriotism equal to any man. He would have been

where Mr. Everett was. One of his own sons was slain in that war. He was not a Northern man with Southern principles; his whole life attested his Northern principles. There never was a time when he was not hated and mistrusted by the Southern leaders. It is not a proof that he was Southern in his sympathies because he was not an Abolitionist; and by an Abolitionist I mean what was meant thirty years ago,— one who was unscrupulously bent on removing slavery by any means, good or bad; since slavery, in his eyes, was a *malum per se*, not a misfortune, an evil, a sin, but a crime to be washed out by the besom of destruction.

Mr. Webster did not sympathize with these extreme views. He was not a reformer; but that does not show that he was unpatriotic, or a Southern man in his heart. "The higher law," to him, was the fulfilment of a contract; the maintenance of promises made in good faith, whether those promises were wise or foolish; the observance of laws so long as they were laws. There was, undeniably, a great evil and shame to be removed, but he was not responsible for it; and he left that evil in the hands of Him who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," — as He did repay in four years' devastations, miseries, and calamities, and these so awful, so unexpected, so ill prepared for, that a thoughtful and kind-hearted person, in view of them, will weep rather than rejoice; for it is not pleasant to witness chastise-

ments and punishments, even if necessary and just, unless the people who suffer are fiends and incarnate devils, as very few men are. Human nature is about the same everywhere, and individuals and nations peculiarly sinful are generally made so by their surroundings and circumstances. The reckless people of frontier mining districts are not naturally worse than adventurers in New York or Philadelphia; nor is any vulgar and ignorant man, in any part of the country, suddenly made rich, probably any coarser in his pleasures, or more sensual in his appearance, or more profane in his language, than was Vitellius, or Heliogabalus, or Otho, on an imperial throne.

But even suppose Mr. Webster, in the decline of his life, intoxicated by his magnificent position or led astray by ambition, made serious political errors. What then? All great men have made errors, both in judgment and in morals, — Cæsar, when he crossed the Rubicon; Theodosius, when he slaughtered the citizens of Thessalonica; Luther, when he quarrelled with Zwingle; Henry IV., when he stooped at Canossa; Elizabeth, when she executed Mary Stuart; Cromwell, when he bequeathed absolute power to his son; Bacon, when he took bribes; Napoleon, when he divorced Josephine; Hamilton, when he fought Burr. The sun itself passes through eclipses, as it gives light to the bodies which revolve around it. Even David and Peter

stumbled. Because Webster professed to know as much of the interests of the country as the shoemakers of Lynn, and refused to be instructed in his political duties by Garrison and Wendell Phillips, does he deserve eternal reprobation? Because he opposed the public sentiments of his constituents on one point, when perhaps they were right, is he to be hurled from his lofty pedestal? Are all his services to be forgotten because he did not lift up his trumpet voice in favor of immediate emancipation? And even suppose he sought to conciliate the South when the South was preparing for rebellion, — is peace-making such a dreadful thing? Go still farther: suppose he wished to conciliate the South in order to get Southern support for the presidency, — which I grant he wanted, and possibly sought, — is he to be unforgiven, and his name to be blasted, and he held up to the rising generation as a fallen man? Does a man fall hopelessly because he stumbles? Is a man to be dethroned because he is not perfect? When was Webster's vote ever bought and sold? Who ever sat with more dignity in the councils of the nation? Would he have voted for "back pay"? Would he have bought a seat in the Senate, even if he had been as rich as a bonanza king?

Consider how few errors Webster really committed in a public career of nearly forty years. Consider the beneficence and wisdom of the measures which he gen-

erally advocated, and which would have been lost but for his eloquence and power. Consider the greatness and lustre of his congressional career on the whole. Who has proved a greater benefactor to this nation, on the floor of Congress, than he? I do not wish to eulogize, still less to whitewash, so great a man, but only to render simple justice to his memory and deeds. The time has come to lift the veil which for thirty years has concealed his noble political services. The time has come to cry shame on those boys who mocked a prophet, and said, "Go up, thou bald-head!" — although no bears were found to devour them. The time has come for this nation to bury the old slanders of an exciting political warfare, and render thanks for the services performed by the greatest intellectual giant of the past generation, — services rendered not on the floor of the Senate alone, not in the national legislature for thirty years, but in one of the great offices of State, when he made a treaty with England which saved us from an entangling war. The Ashburton treaty is the brightest gem in the coronet with which he should be crowned. It was the proudest day in Webster's life when Rufus Choate announced to him one evening that the Senate had confirmed the treaty. It was not when he closed his magnificent argument in behalf of Dartmouth College, not when he addressed the intelligence of New England at Bunker Hill, not when he

demolished Governor Hayne, not when he sat on the woolsack with Lord Brougham, not when he was entertained by Louis Philippe, that the proudest emotions swelled in his bosom, but when he learned that he had prevented a war with England, — for he knew that England and America could not afford to fight; that it would be a fight where gain is loss and glory is shame.

At last, worn out with labor and disease, and perhaps embittered by disappointment, and saddened to see the increasing tendency to elevate little men to power, — the "grasshoppers, who make the field ring with their importunate chinks, while the great cattle chew the cud and are silent," — Webster died at Marshfield, Oct. 24, 1852, at seventy years of age. At the time, he was Secretary of State. He died in the consolations of a religion in which he believed, surrounded with loving friends; and even his enemies felt that a great man in Israel had fallen. Nothing then was said of his defects, for great defects he had, — a towering intellectual pride like Chatham, an austerity like Gladstone, passions like those of Mirabeau, extravagance like that of Cicero, indifference to pecuniary obligations, like Pitt and Fox and Sheridan; but these were overbalanced by the warmth of his affections for his faithful friends, simplicity of manners and taste, courteous treatment of opponents, dignity of character, kindness

to the poor, hospitality, enjoyment of rural scenes and sports, profound religious instincts, devotion to what he deemed the welfare of his country, independence of opinions and boldness in asserting them at any hazard and against all opposition, and unbounded contempt of all lies and shams and tricks. These traits will make his memory dear to all who knew him. And as Florence, too late, repented of her ingratitude to Dante, and appointed her most learned men to expound the "Divine Comedy" when he was dead, so will the writings of Webster be more and more a study among lawyers and statesmen. His fame will spread, and grow wider and greater, like that of Bacon and Burke, and of other benefactors of mankind; and his ideas will not pass away until the glorious fabric of American institutions, whose foundations were laid by God-fearing people, shall be utterly destroyed, and the Capitol, where his noblest efforts were made, shall become a mass of broken and prostrate columns beneath the débris of the nation's ruin! No, not then shall they perish, even if such gloomy changes are possible, any more than the genius of Cicero has faded among the ruins of the Eternal City; but they shall shine upon the most distant works of man, since they are drawn from the wisdom of all preceding generations, and are based on those principles which underlie all possible civilizations!

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